January/February 2016

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

The Winter Issue

The Best of Cape Fear Camera Club

Taylor Brown's Debut Novel

Philip Gerard's *American Anthem*

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2021 Northstar Place · Landfall

Located in Lakeside Villas in Landfall's sought after 1st phase, this all brick residence features an open floor plan with 2 bedrooms including spacious master on the 1st floor and additional bed and bath over the garage. The updated kitchen features stainless Thermador appliances. **$549,000**

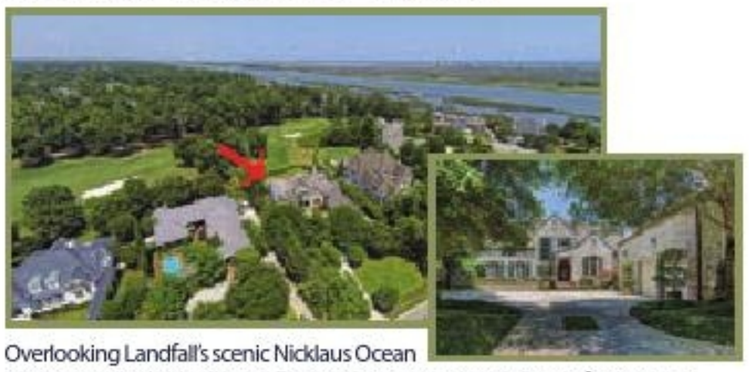
841 Fox Ridge Lane · Landfall

With arched doorways, hardwood floors, 2 fireplaces and an open floor plan, this 3 bedroom charmer exudes light and comfort. It Features a walk-in wet bar and patio/screened porch with golf and water views as well as a great library/den with floor to ceiling book cases, a walk-in floored attic, central vacuum system and plantation shutters. **$644,400**

801 Shell Point Place · Landfall

This home built by master craftsmen Fred Murray sits on a 30 ft. bluff overlooking Howe Creek. An open floor plan and floor to ceiling windows bring the outdoors in! 1st floor features a dark wood study, granite kitchen, master suite, additional suite, sunroom and great room with trey ceiling. The 2nd floor offers 2 bedrooms with a shared sunroom and walk-out terrace. **$1,095,000**

2135 Harborway Drive · Landfall



Overlooking Landfall's scenic Nicklaus Ocean #2, this quality built all brick French Country inspired design features an open floor plan with 2 bedrooms on the 1st floor, including a spacious master. The upstairs floor plan can accommodate a family or offices for stay at home parents. **$1,199,900**

2029 Balmoral Place · Landfall

Sited on a gently sloping, wooded bluff overlooking Landfall's Howe Creek (with tidal creek access for the nature lover), this all-brick, quality built home by Blanton Building features an open floor plan with 10 ft ceilings and generous rooms. **$1,295,000**

1008 Turnberry Place · Landfall

Golf and Intracoastal Waterway views abound from nearly every room in this hill top brick residence. Located on one of Landfall's premiere addresses, Turnberry Place, this home is surrounded by inspiring natural beauty and stunning architecture. **$1,349,000**

1 Oyster Catcher Road · Figure 8

Glorious sunrises and spectacular sunsets abound from this unique Figure Eight Island listing! Extensive wrap around decks are the perfect place to enjoy incredible ocean, sound and inlet views. The reverse floorplan features 4 bedrooms, 3½ baths, plus a vaulted great room and separate den. **$1,395,000**

1947 Prestwick Lane · Landfall

This 3 bedroom, 2 bath, single level Prestwick patio home offers maximum privacy. It features a low maintenance tabby/coquina shell exterior and updated kitchen and master bath. The vaulted living room has a wrap around raised brick terrace and the yard and pond are maintained by the association. **$399,900**

7405 Nautica Yacht Club Drive · Mason Harbor Yacht Club

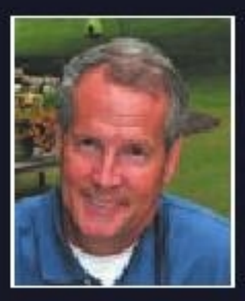
This home checks all the boxes! Quality-built, new construction, 30 ft boat slip, small/friendly neighborhood with waterfront clubhouse and pool. An open floor plan includes 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths with lots of covered porches and large windows to bring the sunshine in! **$870,793**

2328 Ocean Point Drive · Landfall

Tucked amidst moss-draped live oak and palm trees, this contemporary Landfall residence is located on a high bluff and overlooks the Intracoastal Waterway and offers some of our area's best views: the rolling surf of Mason's Inlet between Wrightsville Beach and Figure Eight Island. **$1,775,000**

2111 South Churchill Drive · Highland Hills

Located in the heart of mid town's South Oleander neighborhood with easy access to New Hanover Regional Medical Complex and Cape Fear Country Club, this elegantly appointed painted brick Georgian home has been meticulously updated. **$1,195,000**



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Cover Photograph by Denis Lemay of Cape Fear Camera Club

Photograph this page by Warren Overman of Cape Fear Camera Club

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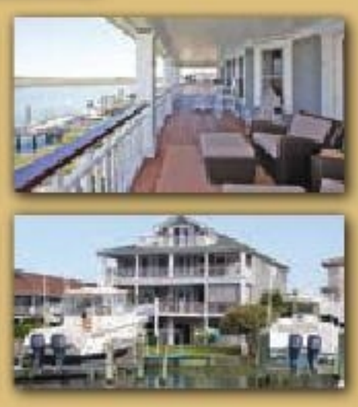

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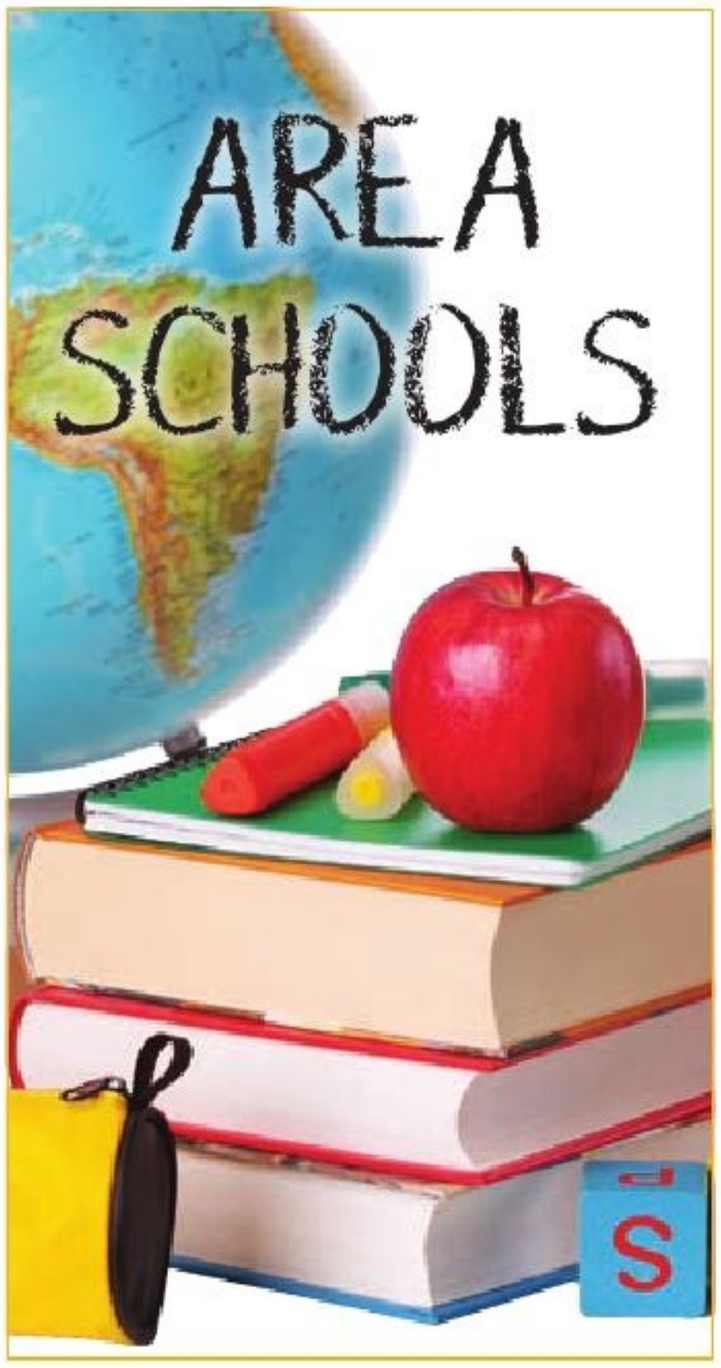

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Area Schools Directory

School Name	Focus	Grades	Enrollment	Students: Faculty	Admission Requirements	Tuition
Cape Fear Academy 3900 South College Road Wilmington, NC 28412 (910) 791-0287 www.capefearacademy.org	Cape Fear Academy is a learning community committed to discovering and developing individual potential, preparing each student for success in college and life. 100% college acceptance.	PK3-12th	600	9:1	Acceptance based on application, academic and citizenship record, admission test scores, and teacher recommendations.	$8,740-$15,975
First Presbyterian Church Preschool & Kindergarten 125 South Third Street Wilmington, NC 28401 (910) 762-2066 www.firstonthird.org	The school allows each child to develop at their own rate. The curriculum encourages self-esteem, independence, creativity and curiosity in a loving, nurturing Christian environment. Tennis, dance, soccer, fitness, yoga, art and basketball are after school activities offered.	5 months-Kindergarten	160	4:1-8:1	Admission is open to all students. Child must be of required age by August 31 of the current school year. Call the Director for more information and to see the school. Current Immunization is a requirement.	$200-$365 (per month) depending on days and ages
Friends School of Wilmington 207 Pine Grove Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 (910) 791-8221 www.fsow.org	Montessori preschool and inquiry-based elementary/middle school. Small classes, vigorous academics, integrated technology. Enrichment program includes art, music, foreign language and athletics.	18 months -8th grade	185	8:1	Varies per grade but includes: application, drawing/writing sample or student questionnaire, teacher recommendation form, transcripts, classroom visit and developmental assessment.	$5,765-$11,025
New Horizons Elementary 3705 South College Road Wilmington, NC 28412 (910) 392-5209 www.newhorizonselementary.org	Nurturing environment promoting student achievement and personal development through a whole child approach. Small classes ensure personal attention for every student. Engaging lessons, inquiry-based projects, and technology are infused into a challenging curriculum that promotes critical thinking, independent learning, and leadership.	K-5th	80	12:1	Admission is open to all qualified students based on academic record, teacher recommendations, and classroom visit.	$7,812-$8,558
St. Mark Catholic School 1013 Eastwood Road Wilmington, NC 28403 (910) 452-2800 www.stmarkcatholicschool.org	St. Mark is a Catholic school which strives to be the benchmark of academic excellence through superior teaching of a rigorous curriculum.	PreK-8th	500	12:1 (PreK-4)	Admission is open to all qualified students based on academic record, admissions test, and classroom visit.	$5,515-$7,245

Special Advertising Directory

Ruined by Quiet

By Jim Dodson

Every January, a dear friend slips away for a three-week retreat into silence and stillness, holing up in a seaside motel somewhere on the Florida coast where he doesn't know a soul. There he fasts, walks the beach morning and evening, reads nourishing books and practices the art of silence learned years ago from a stay at the Kentucky monastery where mystic Thomas Merton lived and worked. He returns in early February thinner, happier and spiritually refreshed by his "trip to nowhere," as I've heard him describe his ritual.

The wise among us have long known the value of such a disappearing act, a journey within that clarifies mind, body and soul.

In a world that's indisputably louder and more distracting than ever, something is always competing for our attention — bills to pay, jobs to finish, candidates hurling insults, terrorists hurling bombs, shouting car salesmen, an Internet that never sleeps, even in the background cacophony of music in restaurants and lawn mowers on Sunday morning. All rob us of something essential.

It's what an ancient Sufi poet I admire called "the silence that speaks" and the *Book of Common Prayer* calls "the peace that passeth all understanding."

To be still and silent, advise the Psalms, is to know God. Chinese sage Lao Tzu insists that stillness reveals eternity. In his recent book *The Art of Stillness*, a lovely little volume, veteran travel writer Pico Iyer relates how a three-day stay at a Benedictine retreat changed his life. "It was a little bit like being called back to somewhere I knew, though I'd never seen the place before," he writes. "Spending time in silence gave everything else in my days fresh value. It felt as if I was slipping outside my life and ascending a small hill from which I could make out a wider landscape. It was pure joy."

I wish I had the time and discipline of Pico Iyer and my contemplative friend, but I probably don't. And yet, thirty years ago a remarkable winter of stillness and silence transformed my life. I've never been quite the same since.

On the heels of seven fast-paced years working for the oldest Sunday magazine in the nation, covering politics and social mayhem across the New South, never pausing to take a vacation and nearly working myself into an early grave, something made me turn down a dream job in Washington, D.C., and move to a bend in Vermont's Green River, where I got myself a golden pup from the local Humane Society and set up housekeeping in a tiny solar cabin heated only by a woodstove and the light of the Northern sun.

I swapped chasing politicians and prosecutors for walking silent snow-covered roads with my dog and showshoeing over to my landlords' house for weekend suppers and conversation. They were aging hippies who'd gotten rich selling chemical toilets to vacationing New Yorkers. Every supper they served tasted a little bit like sautéed boxwood shrubbery, though I'm pretty sure it was healthy for you. They were, in any case, lovely people fully committed to making a better world and matching up their young tenant far from home with suitable female companionship.

With no TV, phone or radio, I spent a lot of time reading and thinking about the point of being alive, marveling how I'd dropped into such a peaceful winter wonderland that allowed me to feel in charge of my own life and let me sleep better than I had in years. My journalism friends were sure I'd "dropped out" to become a hermit.

I probably read or reread fifty books that snowy winter of 1984 — the collected works of Yeats and Frost, all of John Updike's novels, some Shakespeare, the *Bhagavad Gita* and even George Orwell's *1984* just to see how the world he envisioned worked out. Though I spent my days working as the senior writer for a legendary New England magazine called *Yankee* — writing stories that spoke to the soul and soothed the beast that had grown up in the years gone before — it was the silence and stillness I found in every day that changed my life and maybe even saved it.

That spring, after ice out, I found myself a secondhand Orvis rod and taught myself to fly-fish. I also picked up a used set of good golf clubs and began knocking the rust off my long-neglected golf game at an old club in Brattleboro where Rudyard Kipling reportedly played while finishing his work on the just so stories. Most of these self-tutorials were done solo or with my dog and a kindly universe for companions, a volume of Yeats poetry or E.B. White's essays tucked into my fishing vest or golf bag.

The sounds I heard were often just those I made or nature's own instructions — crackling fires, water running over stones, songbirds and wind, the soft crunch of my LL Bean boots on a snowy road at dusk.

Even the excitement of the quadrennial New Hampshire primary failed to knock a dent in my newfound love of stillness and silence. A string of leading candidates all passed through *Yankee's* colorful red barn in Dublin (N.H.) but only served to remind me how grateful I was to have found a

very different kind of life in the nick of time.

One quiet morning that autumn, a beautiful young woman wearing well-worn saddle shoes brought me my office mail. She was the new intern, a recent Wellesley grad and country girl who grew up in Maine.

Our first date was on election night. She asked me who I voted for and I told her Walter Mondale. This was untrue. Owing to my quiet life, I had actually forgotten to register and vote but probably would have voted for Ronald Reagan. I never told her this until after we were married. She'd guessed as much already.

We moved to the end of road in the salt marsh north of Boston. It was so peaceful there, a world shaped by time and tides, a great place to think and write and even get married. There was an older gentleman who lived across the tidal creek. I often saw him at his easel overlooking the marsh. He would wave and I would wave back. We never actually met. But we knew each other just the same, befriended by nature's silence.

As newlyweds we moved to Maine and bought land for a house on a hilltop of birch and hemlock, just off the abandoned town road, surrounded by a silent forest. Our firstborn arrived during a January blizzard. We were living in a cottage on Bailey Island at that time, waiting for spring to start building. The cottage had a 30-mile view of the coast. The sea wind never ceased. Tourists vanished. There was the sound of boats rocking in the tiny harbor, masts pinging.

The house we built was a simple saltbox design. I did most of the interior work myself, laying plank floors from a New Hampshire barn and building cabinets. My grandfather was a master cabinetmaker, the quietest man I ever met. I felt as though I was channeling his spirit.

It was the absolute stillness of that house that I loved most, especially on frigid winter days. Sunlight would flood its rooms and make the golden hemlock beams gently crack as if sighing. The silence was deep, a living presence. It ground my soul like a spear, as the poet Sidney Lanier once described it.

That house produced plenty of other great sounds over the next two decades — laughter from children and dinner guests, guitars being played, the soft scratch as a pencil marked the latest growth spurt on the door frame of the utility room, twenty years of our annual solstice party on the longest night of the year.

I built a massive English garden around that happy house, assuming we would live there forever. I even made a special philosopher's garden with a wooden bench where, after yardwork, I loved to simply sit and listen to absolutely nothing but the birds

Sometimes I still dream about that house, that garden, that quiet place in the forest — wishing, I suppose, that I could go back and hear those sounds again, feel that golden winter silence, simply be there for a while.

But as Pico Iyer reminds me in his fine little book, the greatest gifts of silence and stillness remind us that "what feels like finding real life, that changeless and inarguable something behind all our shifting thoughts, is less a discovery than a recollection."

Not long ago, after taking my daughter and her buddies out to supper in their busy but charming Brooklyn neighborhood, I commented to my wife that even I might be able to live there, given its small-town feel. Wendy grew up just outside New York City, attended college and worked there years before she became my second wife.

She patted my arm. "I'm sure you could, honey. I'd give you three full days."

She knows me well, ruined by the quiet of other worlds. Last autumn she and I went to the mountains two weekends in a row just for the solitude and November light. This winter we hope to slip away to the peace and quiet of a cottage tucked into the dunes on the Outer Banks, hoping no one but the wind will know we're there.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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How do we love thee, *Cinematique*? Let us count the ways and whys, starting with thy most striking features (or at least thy upcoming ones). First, *Chi-Raq*, a modern day adaptation of *Lysistrata*, the fifth-century-Athens-era comedy about a woman who attempts to end the Peloponnesian War by persuading the women of Greece to withhold carnal privileges from their lovers. Directed by Spike Lee, this satire-meets-musical-drama is set against the backdrop of gang violence in Chicago and runs Monday, January 25, through Wednesday, January 27, at 7 p.m. (plus Wednesday, January 27, at 4 p.m.) at Thalian Hall Main Stage. And then thou bringeth *Peggy Guggenheim: Art Addict*. In 1978–79, Peggy Guggenheim gave what would unknowingly be the last interview of her life for Jacqueline B. Weld's biography *Peggy: The Wayward Guggenheim*. The tapes were long thought to be lost, but guess what? Now we can hear her incredible story, peppered with exquisite tales such as the time she met Jackson Pollock and "rescued" him from his job as a carpenter. Runs Monday, February 1, through Friday, February 5, at 7 p.m. (plus Wednesday, February 3, at 4 p.m.) at The Ruth & Bucky Stein Theatre, Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets: $7. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Living the Dream

On Saturday, February 13, at 7:30 p.m., UNCW Presents and *Salt* magazine present the album launch of *American Anthem*, the recording debut of Philip Gerard, Wilmington-based author and professor of creative writing at UNC Wilmington. Gerard and his band will play songs from the new album — "a textured musical quilt of the American experience" — the making of which you'll want to read about on page 48 of this month's *Salt*. CD signing and general revelry to follow concert. Tickets: $5 (available in advance and at the door). Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 962-3500.

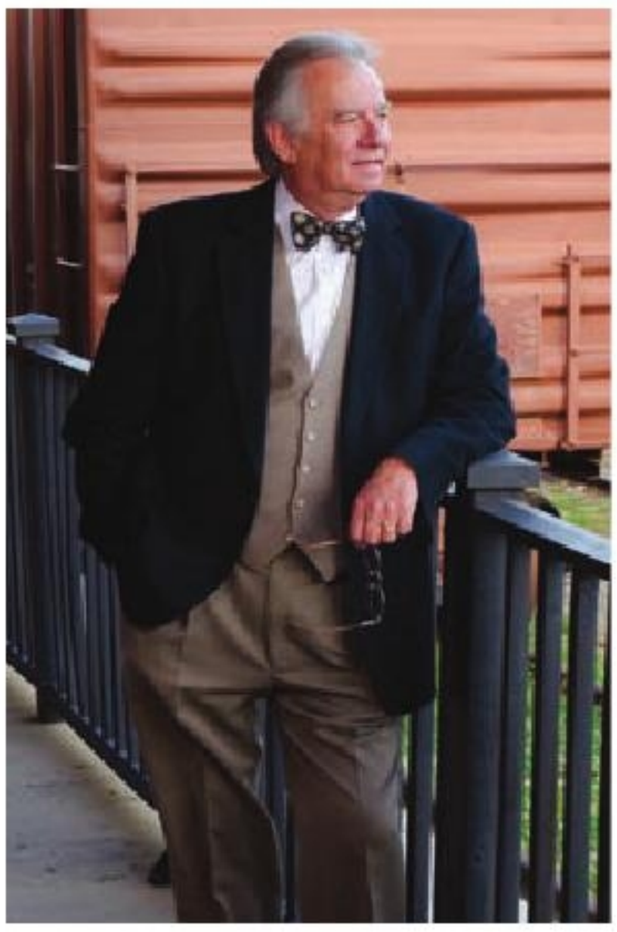
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

Founders Keepers

The New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation's sixteenth annual Founder's Gala will be a (starry) night to remember. Inspired by one of Vincent van Gogh's finest and most iconic paintings, the setting will be a glorious swirl of blue and yellow lights, creating the brilliant illusion of an enchanted night sky. This black-tie gala happens Saturday, January 30, with live music, dancing, and epicurean delights from Wilmington's top chefs. Dedicated to supporting the NHRMC Betty H. Cameron Women's and Children's Hospital, this glittering affair is expected to gather more than 600 guests. Limited tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available online. Air Wilmington Hangar, 1817 Aviation Road, Wilmington. For more information about New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation or to register, call (910) 667-5002 or visit www.nhrmcfoundation.org.

Legend Has It

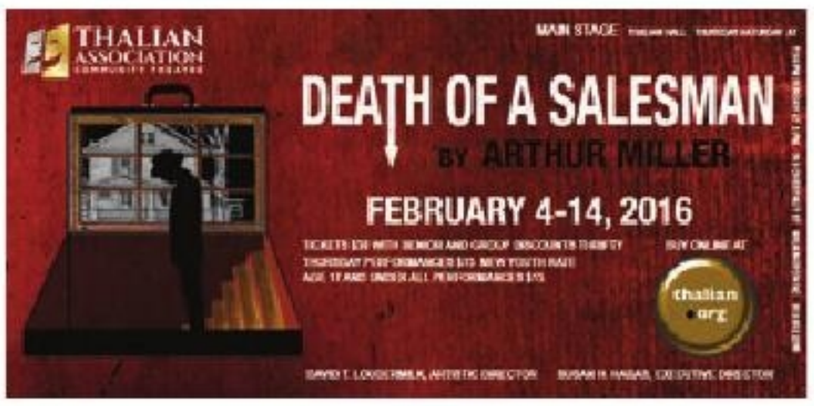
If you've never heard local legend Grenoldo Frazier perform, do yourself a favor and snag two tickets (because you'll want to bring a date) to his Jazz at the CAM concert on Thursday, February 11, at 6:30 p.m. All you need to know in six words: Soulful love songs with a twist. Is there a candy heart that says, "Be There"? General: $12; CAM/CFJS Members: $8; Students: $5. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.



South Winded

Back in November, Hallsboro natives Bill Thompson and Doug Sasser sold and signed nearly two hundred copies of their new book, *Listen to the South Wind* (Indigo Sea Press; $34.95), at their Columbus County Arts Center book launch in nearby Whiteville. "Just an overwhelming response," says Thompson, whose poetry and lyrical prose accompany over one hundred striking images of a distinctly Southern landscape and culture captured through the lens of photographer Doug Sasser. "When Doug and I first started discussing the possibility of putting together this book," Thompson writes in the preface, "we knew we didn't want to do just another 'coffee table book' with pretty pictures and text describing the photos to the reader." The result is a book filled with stand-alone images, stories and reflections that effectively capture a sense of time and place. "By combining our perspectives, we hope the reader can see beyond our individual views, beyond what we have absorbed during our lives, beyond what we write or record with the camera," says Thompson. Indeed, the reader can feel the pulse of Southern spirit on every page. Info: www.indigoseapress.com.

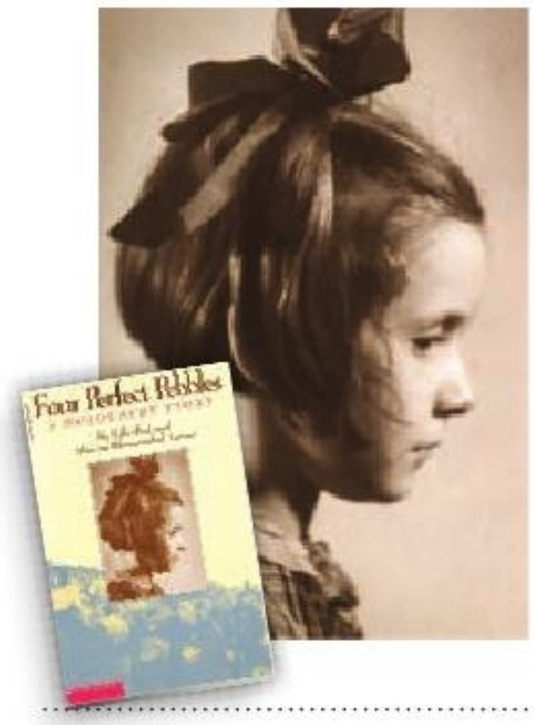
Class Acts



American playwright Arthur Miller's 1949 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning *Death of a Salesman* has been revived on Broadway four times, thrice winning Tony Awards for Best Revival. Thursday, February 4, through Sunday, February 14, see how Thalian Association brings this classic – and defeated salesman Willy Loman – to the Main Stage at Thalian Hall, Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets: $30; $15 (Thursdays and youth). Speaking of youth tickets, now's time for aspiring performers to register for Thalian Association's Youth Academy. Build confidence, make new friends and step into the spotlight during this new session. Classes begin Monday, February 1, and run through Thursday, April 28. See class descriptions and register online. Locations: The Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center and the New Hanover County Library Executive Development Center (at Landfall). Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalian.org

Pleasures of Life

The annual Wilmington Wine and Chocolate Festival returns for three scrumptious days which spell, in two words, early Valentine. On Friday, January 29, from 7–10 p.m., The Grand Tasting features a European-style street market, complimentary hors d'oeuvres prepared by Chef Sam of Catering Thyme, live music by El Jaye Johnson and the Port City All Stars, and entertainment by internationally renowned comedian Basile (8 p.m. at the Riverview Comedy and Craft Beer Lounge, stocked, of course, by Wilmington's Broomtail Craft Brewery). The Wine and Chocolate Marketplace continues Saturday, January 30, from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., and Sunday, January 31, from 12–4 p.m. Sample sweet sensations and fine wines from the region's signature chocolatiers and top Carolina wineries, plus specialty foods, spices, oils and fruit vinegars from near and far. Culinary demos throughout the weekend. Can you say vintage and chocolate debauchery? Bring your sweetheart. Coastline Conference and Event Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Tickets/Info: www.wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.



A Tale of Survival

In her memoir, *Four Perfect Pebbles*, Holocaust survivor Marion Blumenthal Lazan recalls the devastating years that shaped her childhood. Following Hitler's rise to power, the Blumenthal family spent six-and-a-half years living in refugee, transit and prison camps that included Westerbork in Holland and the notorious Bergen-Belsen in Germany. Hear Lazan's incredible story of hope, hardship and survival on Tuesday, February 23, 6:30 p.m., at the St. Mark Catholic School Gymnasium, 1013 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 452-2800.

Poetry In Motion

Critically acclaimed Durham-based dance company Gaspard&Dancers will bring three contemporary pieces to the local stage on Tuesday, February 16, at 7:30 p.m. Playful, lyrical and haunting, these emotionally charged works have been described in many ways: exuberant, organi, and buoyant, for instance. But the title of their newest work, *Tota Pulchra Es* (*You Are All Beautiful*), suggests that the magic is in the eye of the beholder. Tickets: $30. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBIN GALLANT AND KEVIN YATAROLA

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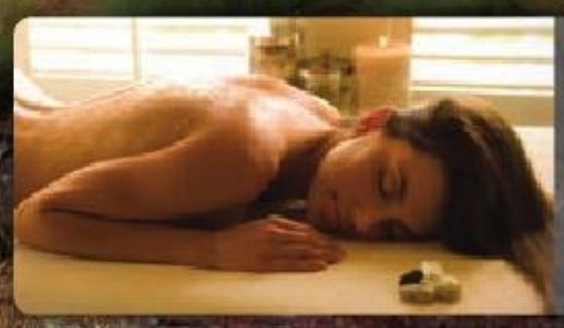

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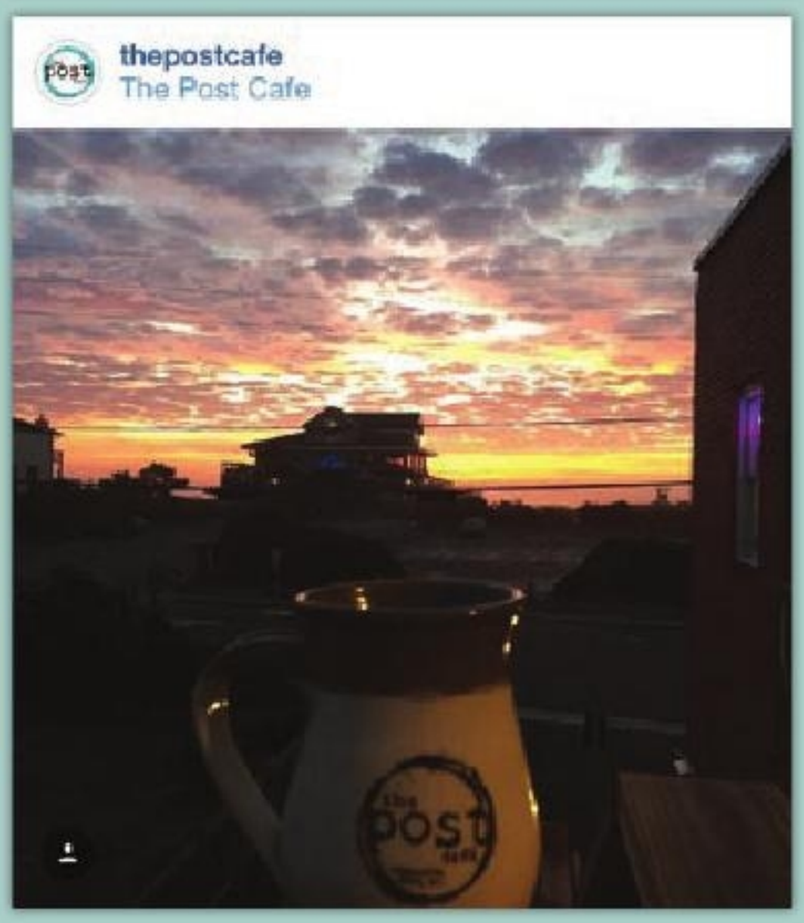

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The Harp From Dreamland

Discovering the Sacred Infinity Inside Each Song

By Ashley Wahl

It's simple, really. Not something I thought much about. I just woke up one morning with an impulse to learn to play the harp.

Of course I knew nothing about the instrument. I'd never even touched one. But the vision of playing one haunted me like a Siren's song and before I knew it, I was on a quest of fulfilling a dream that had seemingly materialized out of thin air.

Plink.

I knew I wasn't looking for a harp so large it would require a dolly or a minivan to transport. I wanted something small, approachable. An instrument you might imagine in the lap of a traveling bard.

After watching countless YouTube videos, many posted by a nymph of a woman who adapts contemporary tunes for her metallic blue electric lever harp, my heart was set. I, too, wanted to play seaside, beneath the twisted branches of a quiet forest — enveloped by the natural world. Within a matter of weeks, FedEx delivered a 19-string pixie folk harp to my front door.

She's a beauty. Thirty-one inches high with an inlaid rosewood frame that looks like something straight out of Middle-Earth. I admired her with the wonder of a child looking upon a newborn sibling.

Although it took me an hour to replace the string I broke during my first attempt at tuning, I promised to be patient with myself. Besides, I hadn't played an instrument since sixth grade, an awkward year spent navigating the middle school hallways with a trombone and a mouthful of braces. In high school, I joined the chorus. Which leads me to what sparked this crazy impulse in the first place: singing.

For as far back as I can remember, singing has been my tonic of choice. And so it was on my last visit to Asheville when, having spent the night picking out harmonies during a jam session with my ukulele-playing brother, I woke from a deep sleep on the living room couch with a desire to learn how to play an instrument. Yes, the harp. And I wanted to sing while playing it.

We are still learning one another, my pixie harp and me. Mostly I play chords to familiar songs, but remembering how to read music is on the horizon.

The beauty of this venture is that it's all my own — and all at my own pace.

My favorite song to play is still the first one I learned, a contemporary folk song with wistful lyrics and a plaintive melody that has the lulling effect of a carousel. I picked out the simple piano riff, and once I had the notes down, was ready for the next leg of the journey: playing and singing at the same time, a meditative practice that feels, to me, a bit like flying. I have spent hours in this seemingly timeless state.

One summer evening, while I was practicing beneath a stand of pines in a nearby park, the wind began playing my harp, creating the most ethereal sound I'd ever heard. I dropped my fingers from the strings, closed my eyes and listened, grateful to have a glimpse into a world that felt both distant and omnipresent. In that short, sacred infinity, I felt like the harp had chosen me.

When she isn't playing among the trees, senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

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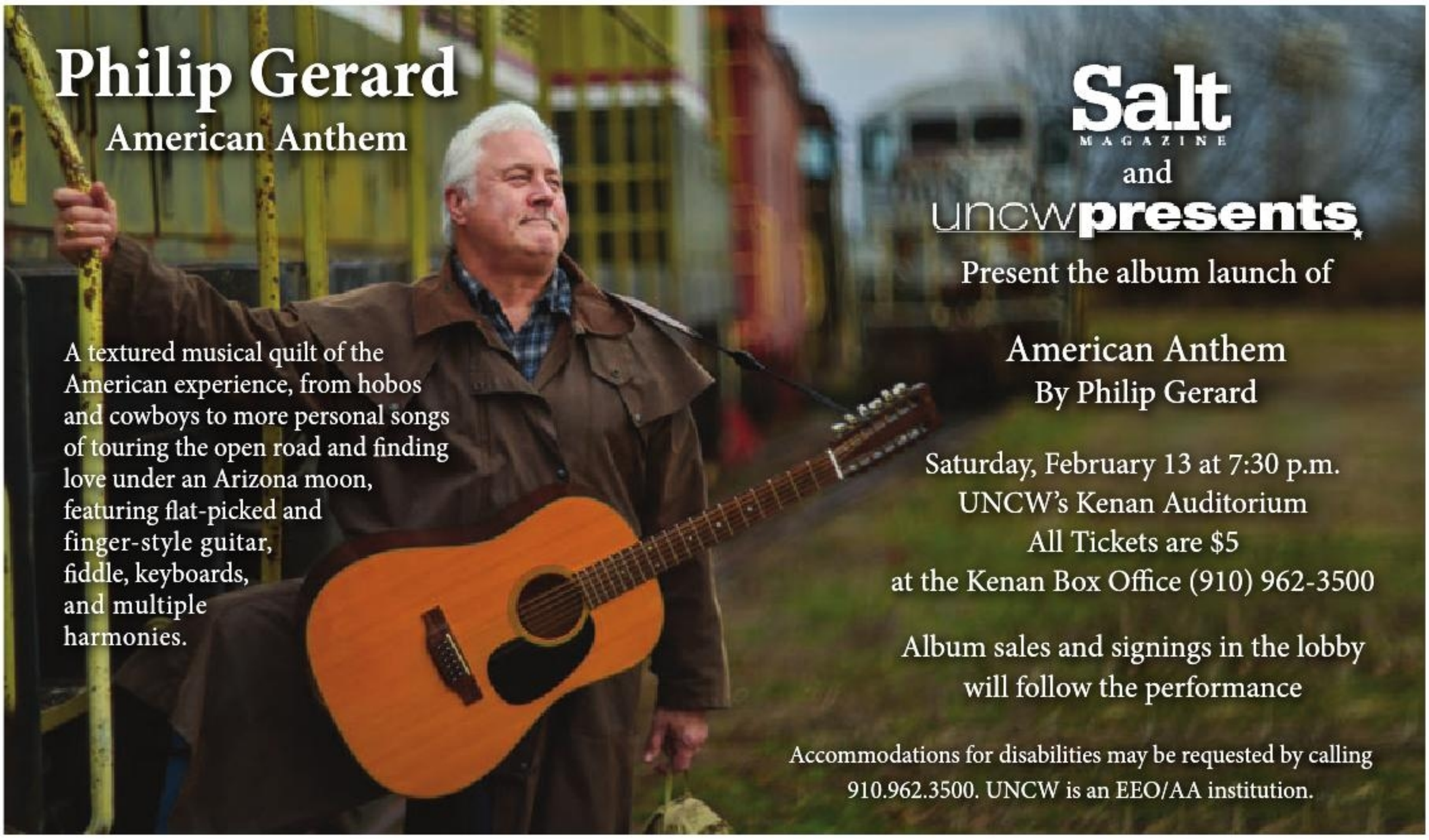
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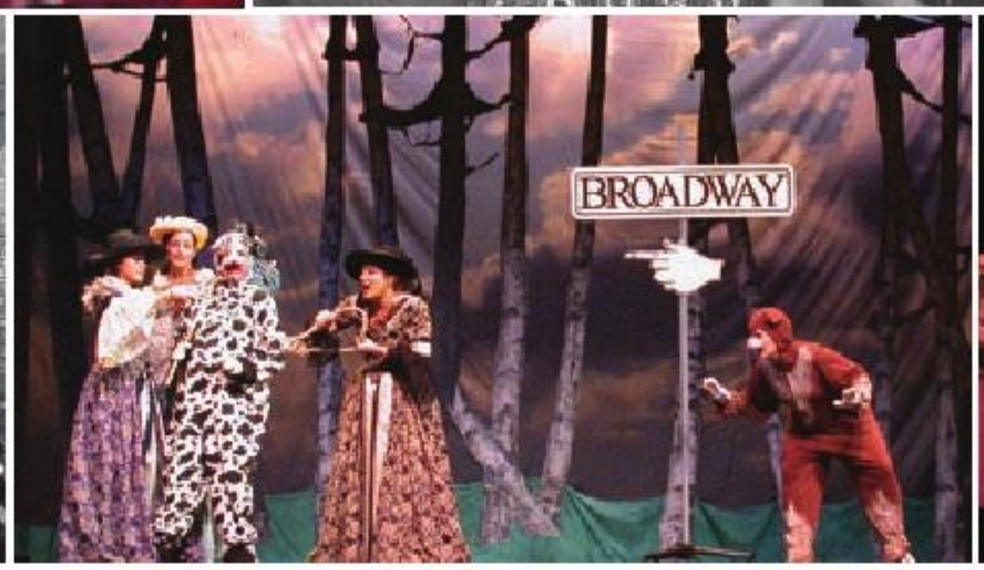
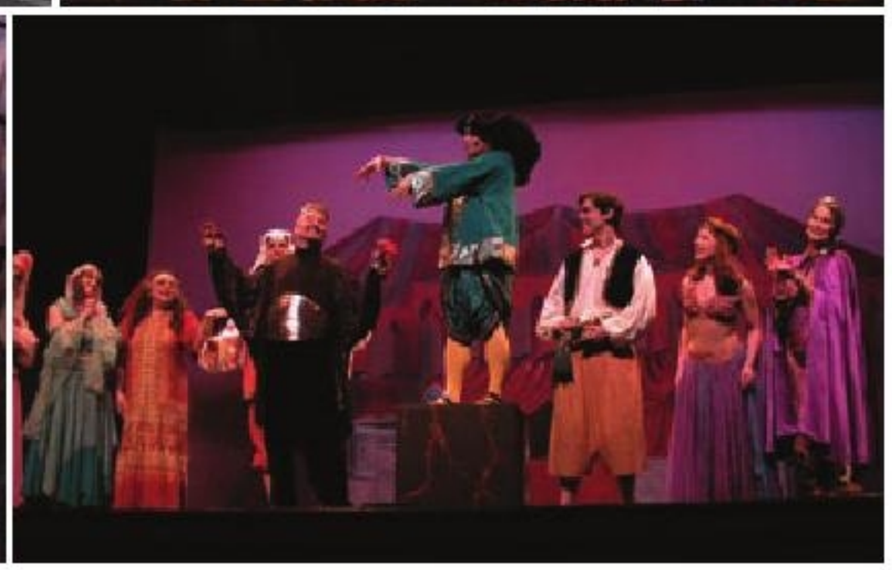
Pied Piper Theatre

The evolution of a beloved children's theater reflects the changing face of our community





PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THALIAN HALL

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Tony Rivenbark has trouble with his spotlight. It just won't stay put. He has to chase it down and try to hammer it into place at least twice a day every January. "If you don't catch the spotlight the show can't go on. You cannot allow a spotlight, to run loose. You have to be in control of the spotlight." Rivenbark grins and gives a theatrical head shake. The spotlight gag has opened Pied Piper Theatre productions in Wilmington since Doug Swink introduced it in the 1970s. For those of us lucky enough to grow up here, Pied Piper Theatre produces a play that every first-and-second grade student in New Hanover County sees for free at Thalian Hall every January.

In some ways, the evolution of the show traces the changing face of our community. "Originally the Junior League started doing touring theater. They would load up their station wagons and they would go to Chestnut Street School (now renamed Annie H. Snipes Elementary School) and they would do a play for the kids there – this would have been the 1950s," Rivenbark notes. "The real Pied Piper project began as we know it when Kenan Auditorium opened – that had 1,000 seats so you could bring kids into the theater instead of taking the shows to the schools."

Doug Swink, founder of the drama program at Wilmington College (the precursor to UNCW), was instrumental in the design of Kenan Auditorium. When the thousand-seat venue opened in 1970, he advocated for the Junior League to join forces with the program he had built at UNCW to produce the annual shows. Rivenbark recalls that the ladies of the Junior League were the primary performers. Doug Swink would write and direct, and his lifetime collaborator, Kay Swink, would choreograph the dances. When they needed additional male players, Swink would pull from the pool of community talent that he had nurtured through his classes and The Straw Hat Summer Theater. Rivenbark was one of the young men recruited by Swink in the '70s for Pied Piper, and he has been with the company ever since.

Though Rivenbark is best known in our community as the executive director of Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, to a large group of children he will forever be Bossy the cow. "We have five or six shows that we do almost in rep," Rivenbark notes. They include *Aladdin*, *Tortoise and the Hare*, and *The Bean Stalk Trilogy* (*Beanstalk*, *Bossy in Space* and *Bossy on*

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Broadway), and this year's show: *Bug Story*.

In the late 1980s, the beautiful antebellum theater downtown was renovated. "When we renovated and reopened Thalian Hall in 1990, Doug was basically retiring from the university. Some of the people who had been involved with Pied Piper were on my board, so a deal was worked out that we would shift Pied Piper to Thalian Hall," Rivenbark explains. In order to equal the capacity of Kenan Auditorium, Pied Piper began playing two shows a day. They also moved toward semi-professional leading community actors — partly because Junior League members had evolved from women with free mornings to working professionals, but also because the nature of theater in Wilmington has changed. Now you can produce top quality theater for children in two weeks — with a group of trusted colleagues and an archive that goes back fifty years. Rivenbark points out that between the stored costumes, sets and props, and the archival photographs and videos, they basically have the entire process ready to hit the stage every year. "The children of our community have this wonderful experience and they remember it."

"I think Pied Piper signals the enormous interest in theater by young people in this town. That is part of life in Wilmington: being on the stage, having been on the stage, going to an event," Rivenbark continues. "I think that the Pied Piper Theatre has had an influence on elementary school children going back over fifty years. It is one of the reasons Wilmington has such an array of theatrical activity."

That inspiring educational component of Pied Piper is really a wonderful reflection of the man who made Pied Piper a priority for this community: Doug Swink. "Doug was a great mentor to so many people in this community," Rivenbark says. "We are just a generation after Doug Swink doing what he was doing. The mantle was passed to me, and at some point I will have to pass the mantle to someone else." Until then, his spotlight is waiting, and so is his audience.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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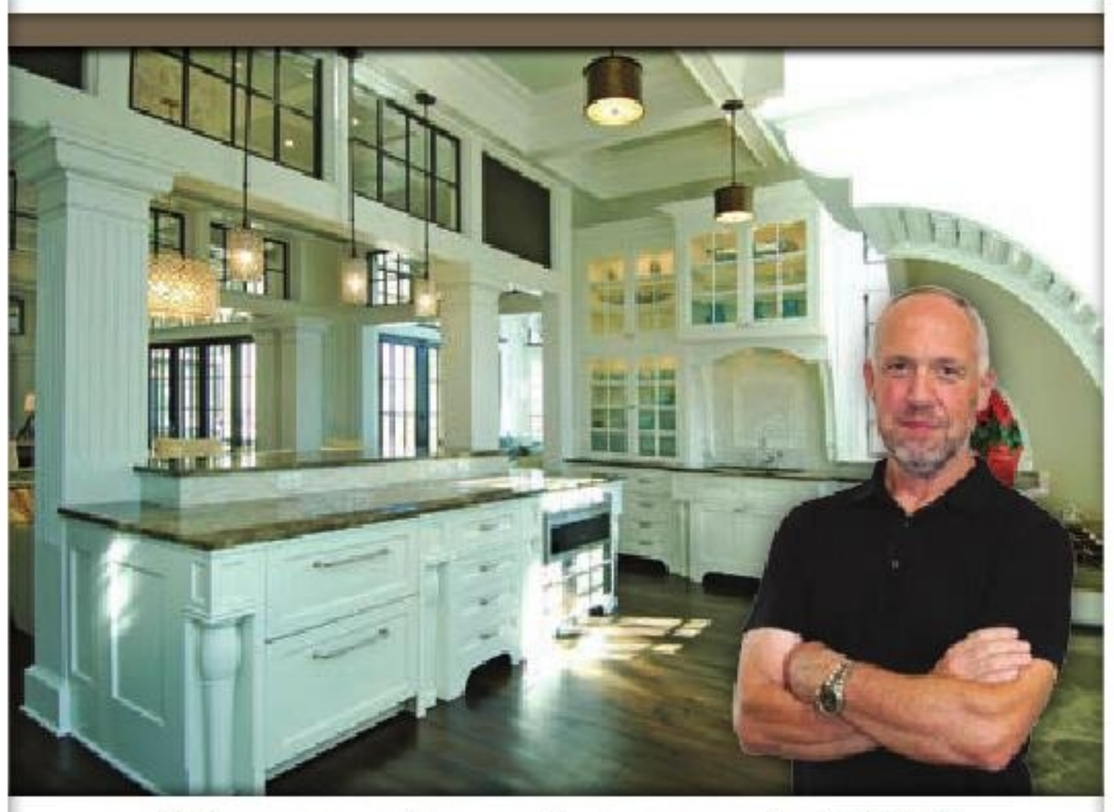

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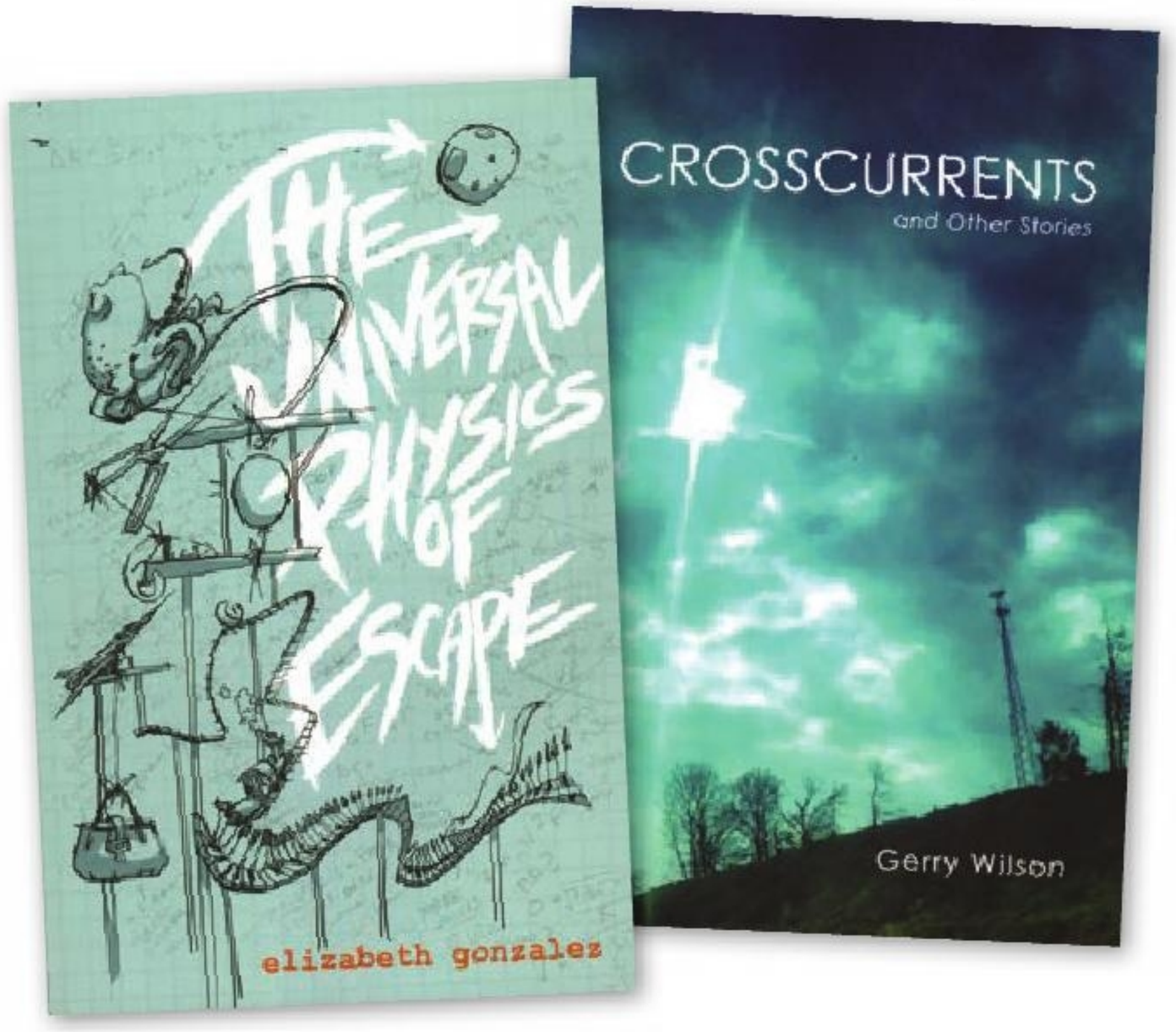

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Since 2005, Winston-Salem based Press 53 has steadily built a reputation for nurturing great debut authors. Not to say they don't publish established authors, because they do, but their annual collections continue to cultivate writers at the beginning of their career.

According to Kevin Watson, founder of Press 53, the 2015 Award for Short Fiction had over 250 entries. "After selecting our winner, which was difficult enough, I had three other manuscripts I couldn't get out of my mind, so I offered contracts." One of those manuscripts was Gerry Wilson's short story collection, *Crosscurrents and Other Stories*. For weeks after I read it, I couldn't get it out of my head either.

Compelling story is conflict, and Wilson's title lives up to its promise: Her characters are caught in the cross-currents of internal and external conflicts, some quite literally—drowning is a reoccurring theme ("Crosscurrents, Pieces", "Book of Lies")—others metaphorically. But the characters are haunting. "Book of Lies", chronicling Robin's crisis raising her unwanted niece, Molly, following a suicide, looks not so much at the immediate trauma of the suicide but the fractal-like pain that seeps and permeates their lives for years to come. For days I wandered around different scenarios for Molly's outcome in my head: If her father had just . . . What about her cousins? . . . Will she ever understand that sometimes you just give children a simple answer (a lie) to an impossible question? But harder to shake was "The One to Go" and the horrific wake of Mallory's life. The re-emergence of now-pregnant Mallory, a run away presumed dead, rattles the walls of her father and stepmother's lives. Wilson deftly shows us the struggles of two generations of women, Mallory and the stepmother who sees too much of herself in the frightening younger woman. Both ache for something that neither can explain to the other. The author's execution is exquisite to encounter.

Wilson's author bio notes that she is the grandmother and step-grandmother of ten. The heartache of family life is clearly closely ingrained in her consciousness and permeates most of the stories. Even "Appendix", which ostensibly is about an affair, reflects the pain of not belonging, of not being the chosen one, with the affirming title of wife. It makes a nice juxtaposition for "Wives', a first-person account of the first wife sharing the birth of a grandchild not only with her ex-husband but with his fourth wife as well. Perhaps what makes Wilson's writing so unexpected is the surprising yet unspoken—and often overlooked—strength in her female characters. She creates horrid adversity for them and surrounds them with people who undermine them and then shows them having greater wells of strength than their males counterparts comprehend.

Wilson combines an arrow-sharp aim for the heart with an evocative vocabulary to create memorable tableaus of human experience. Alternately

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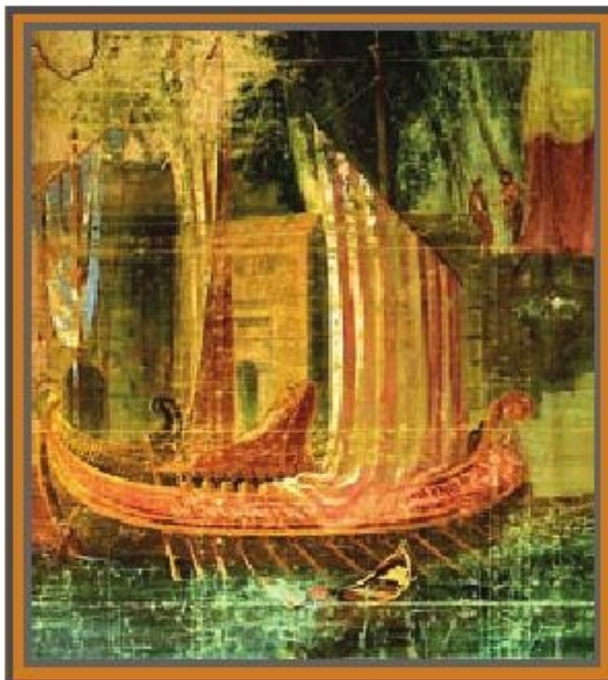

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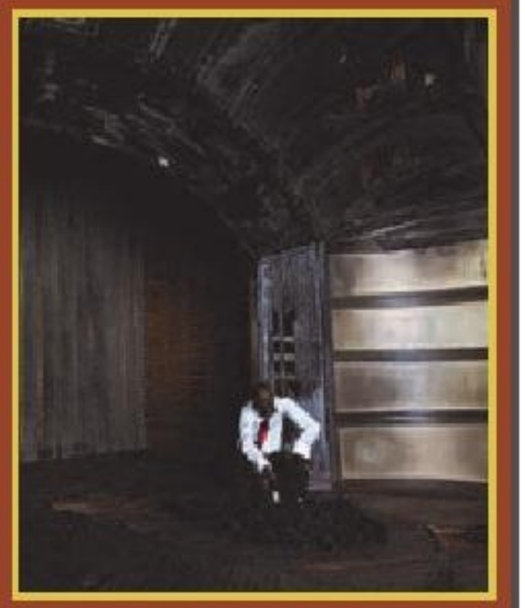

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distressing and compelling, *Crosscurrents* is one of my favorite story collections I have encountered in a very long time.

The winner of the 2015 Press 53 Award for Short Fiction, *The Universal Physics of Escape* by Elizabeth Gonzalez, is a very different collection from *Crosscurrents*. Though both are debut collections by women, they approach the world through disparate lenses. The than Appalachian Mountains and rural Pennsylvania provide the specific, restricting settings that Gonzalez's characters seek and fear, escape to and from.

The title story parallels an octopus' survival strategies with a suburban housewife slowly dying from self-repression. It's not an abusive relationship, it's a series of narrowing choices and compromises that slowly, successfully cause the protagonist to not exist in any definable, real way. Without saying as much, Gonzalez presents the lament of many mommies: I no longer have an identity except as "so-and- so's mom."

"Half Beat", set in Ohio, again works with parallels: a young girl and a spinster music teacher. Perhaps that is where Gonzalez is strongest — that mirror of fear and hope we see in each other, a theme she returns to over and over again: the tough coal miner grandparents in "Shakedown", and most heartbreakingly with Zeke and Lanie in "Weather". Zeke is famous in their small town for killing his brother in a hunting accident at age 14. Lanie's meth-addled son killed himself, Lanie's granddaughter and two other innocent people in a car accident. Gonzalez doesn't preach for or about either character, nor does she resolve either of their pain. Instead, she lets these two lonely people find in each other a mutual recognition of something no one else can understand — not even their grieving family members.

Reading the description of Lanie teaching her granddaughter to recognize the signs that her father was high on meth — and how to leave him, to find another adult and ask the stranger to call her grandmother to come pick her up — was rending. The passage haunted me for days. How do you even begin to have that conversation with a child — to come to a point that any stranger is a safer alternative than Dad? Then to have the worst fears borne out in such mythic proportions. The addict's cry of "It's my life!" coming to a screeching halt as he kills three other people with him. In a few spare paragraphs Gonzalez gives us this picture to sit, to contemplate, and to read with caution.

Crosscurrents and *The Universal Physics of Escape* are both worthy investments from your local independent bookstore. North Carolina is lucky to have an independent publisher like Press 53 to seek out and recognize such talent.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street in Wilmington.

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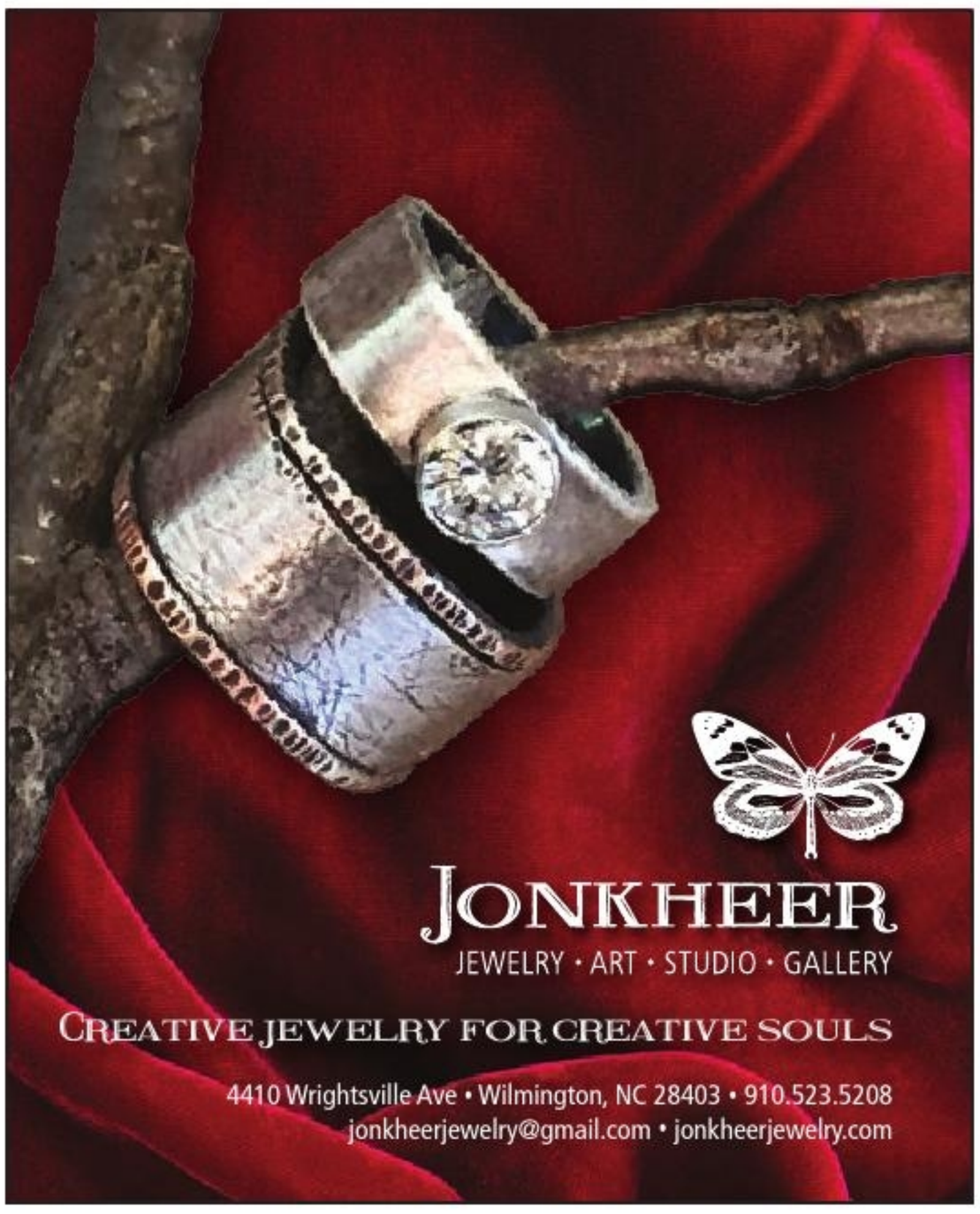
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Might As Well

Talk of life, tangy shrimp and the story of our world

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

By Dana Sachs

Dr. Patricia Kelley can read the beach like a book. Strolling along the sand, she will pick up a shell and see "a whole history of how that animal lived and died and the other organisms that interacted with it." Some marks tell her that a clam repaired its shell after a crab attack, while the shape of a hole in its shell offers evidence of a carnivorous snail attack. With this kind of detective work, she says, "You can figure out who is the murderer."

Who knew that paleontology could be such a thriller? When Tricia, as friends call her, talks about her work, you begin to understand that she is trying to unravel a great mystery — the story of Earth over millions of years. Her own curiosity and enthusiasm make other people curious and enthusiastic too, which accounts for the popularity of her classes at UNCW, where she is a professor in the department of geography and geology. It also explains why the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, along with the Carnegie Foundation, named Tricia its 2014 Outstanding Master's University and College Professor of the Year. For the whole country.

Tricia Kelley loves teaching, even though she "never had a course in how to teach." At Harvard, where she earned her Ph.D. in the 1970s, professors mostly followed the traditional model of standing in front of a class and lecturing. "The idea was that the faculty member has knowledge that needs to be conveyed to students," Tricia explained when we met for lunch. "The most efficient way to do that is to get up and tell them."

Once she became a professor herself, Tricia followed that model, first at the University of Mississippi and, later, at the University of North Dakota. But standing and talking in front of a class began to bore her. "It seemed like it could be more fun," she said. "I wanted to get students more actively involved." In North Dakota, she started devising innovative methods to excite her students intellectually. Instead of delivering a lecture on the extinction of dinosaurs, for example, she began to ask more open-ended questions: "Let's think about what causes extinction," she would say, and then she'd ask students to "brainstorm why it may have happened."

Since Tricia arrived at UNCW in 1997, her teaching style has continued to evolve. Even in a large introductory class like Prehistoric Life, which enrolls up to one hundred students, she finds creative ways to teach. "The class is very crowded and the students can't really move," she told me, "but at least once a day I have them doing small-group brainstorming." During a lesson on duck-billed dinosaurs, for example, she brings in a collection of vintage hats. Students don the hats, then pair up with others wearing similar styles. "They have to find their 'date to the prom' based on head gear," a process that helps clarify that duck-billed dinosaurs identified potential mates based on skull structure. At another point in the semester, students engage in the "Dance of DNA," an in-class exercise that sounds like a game show and miraculously clarifies how DNA molecules encode the structure of proteins. This kind of dynamic engagement has not only made Tricia's classes very popular, but has also convinced many students who never considered geology to change their plans. "A lot come in thinking they'll be marine biology majors," Tricia said. "Then they gravitate toward us."

Tricia and I met at Might As Well Bar and Grill on Racine Drive, an easy distance from UNCW's campus. With an outdoor patio bar and a spacious interior, Might As Well offers a wide selection of burgers and wings, plus some two dozen beers on tap, a frozen drinks menu, and daily specials like a Sunday Funday Bloody Mary Bar. It's easy to imagine the place crowded at night with college

students conducting typical young homo sapiens rituals, but at lunchtime it has a quiet, cave-like vibe and the subdued atmosphere and vaguely beer-ish scent of a party that you arrived at about ten hours late.

Tricia is a wry and vivacious companion, but she remains a scientist, even over lunch. When we tried the Firecracker Shrimp, which was lightly fried, topped with tangy sauce, speckled with black sesame seeds, and served in a martini glass, she assessed it carefully before making a thoughtful determination: "It has a bit of a kick to it. The dressing is very smooth. And the seeds give it an interesting texture." When we tried the Black and Blue Burger – rubbed with Cajun spices and topped with crumbled blue cheese and pickles – she took her time before concluding, "I would get this again." As for the garlic mashed potatoes, this self-professed "potato person" turned to her skills of deduction: "Obviously, they're homemade because they're a little lumpy. And they're infused with garlic." Final grade? "Successful."

At Harvard, Tricia conducted her Ph.D. research under the direction of the renowned paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, who originated the hypothesis that evolution is more likely to be episodic than a sequence of constant gradual change. "It was a new hypothesis and nobody had deliberately collected data to test it," Tricia told me and so, for her dissertation, "I decided to do it." For that kind of research, a single specimen, like a dinosaur bone, wouldn't provide

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enough evidence. That's when Tricia first turned her focus to seashells, or mollusks, which span the millennia, are readily available and abundant fossils, and — in a nod to aesthetics, if not science — "are pretty." From cliffs along the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland, she collected 3,700 fossil shells, took 35,000 measurements, and wrote about how the evolution in these shells reflected Gould's hypotheses of episodic change.

"Did you prove his theory?" I asked.

Tricia shook her head, not to let me know that Gould had erred, but to communicate that I'd asked the wrong question. I was missing the point of scientific inquiry. "You don't prove a hypothesis," she said gently. "You test it."

"And what did your tests reveal?"

She smiled. "My research supported his hypothesis," she said. Her words were simple, but her eyes glowed with satisfaction. I thought of all those measurements she had made, all those hours spent hovering over the shells of snails. It was painstaking work, and no doubt tedious. But in those shells lay the story of our world.

Might As Well Bar and Grill is located at 250 Racine Drive. For more information, visit mightaswellbarandgrill.com or call (910) 228-5365.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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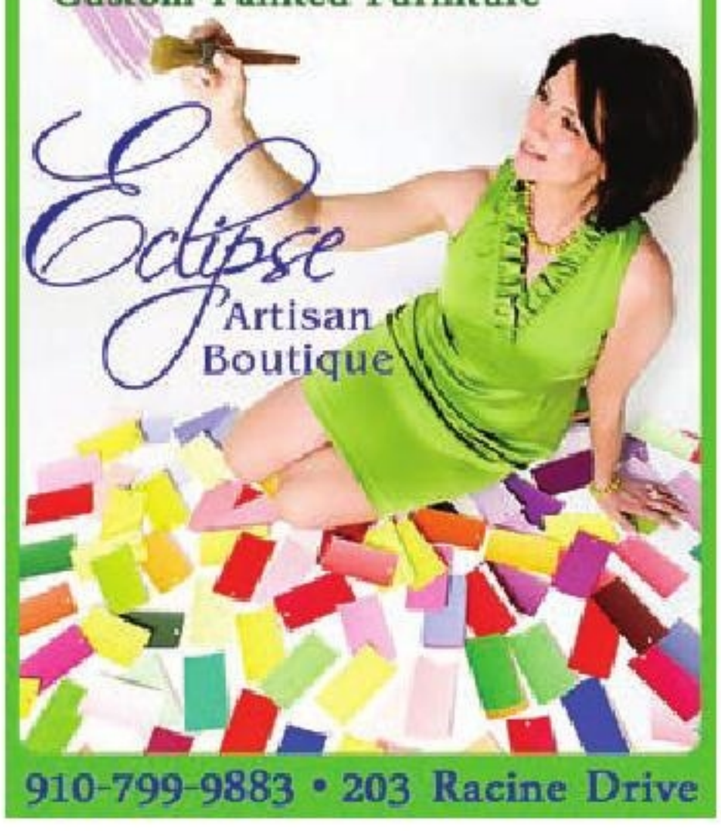

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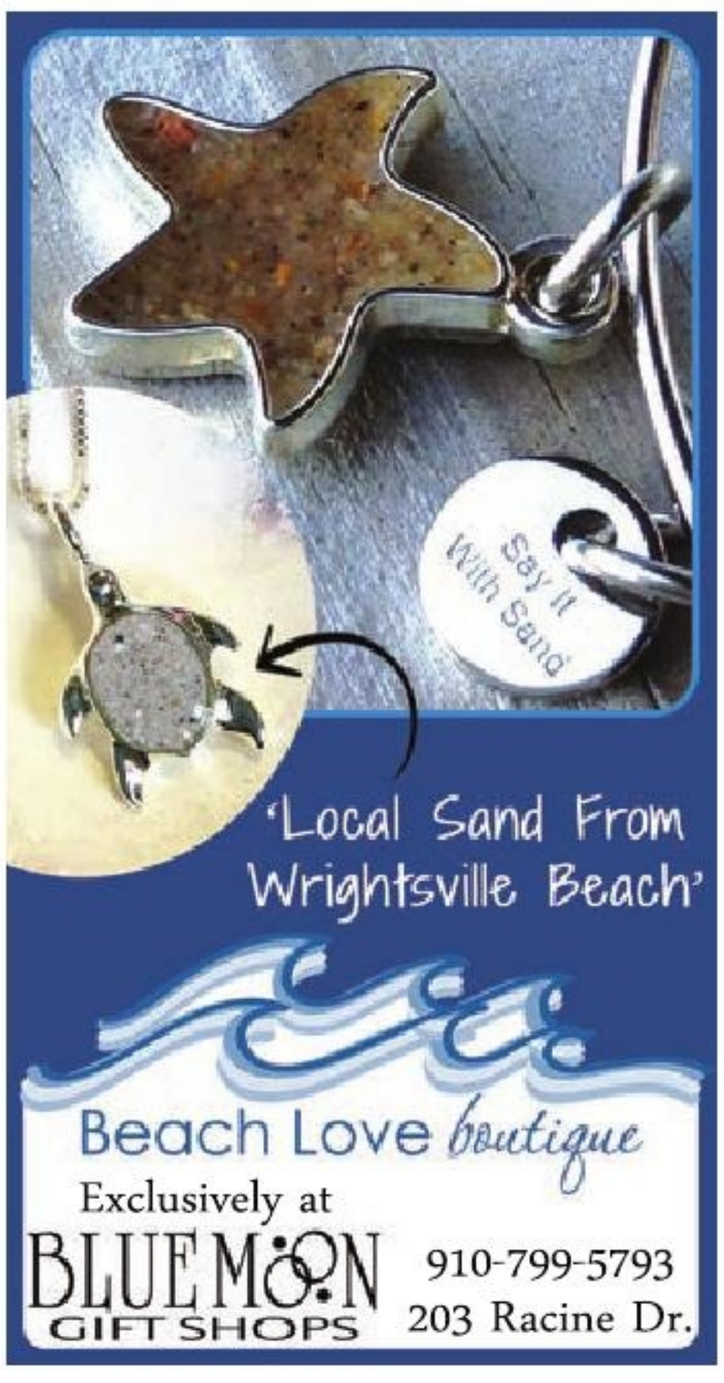

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True Mountain 'High'

Our man of adventure falls – literally – for the charms of winter sports in the Carolina mountains

By Jason Frye

"Any of y'all nervous?" asks our instructor. Clad head to toe in Gore-Tex gear, goggled up, and totally at ease on his skis, he already knows the answer this ragtag bunch of ski newbies will give. One look at our outfits — rented ski bibs and some of us wearing so many jackets we don't have full use of our arms — was all he needed. We chuckle a little, try not to fall over. "Well, you picked the right ski instructor today," he says. "I'm a pastor and I put in a good word with someone," he points skyward with one fat, glove-covered finger, "just a few minutes ago, so I think you'll all do just fine."

With that, he launches into the instructions. Hold the poles like this. Crouch and lean forward like so. To turn, push this way. To slow down, turn your feet like this.

It's easy; he has us laughing at ourselves and at each other. The group I'm with starts to get the hang of it and we tackle the bunny slope with a growing sense of boldness. Then one of our ranks topples off the Magic Carpet, the conveyor belt that takes us from the bottom to the top of the learners' area.

Then we see the kids. Three of them with an instructor sporting his very first beard. These kids, they zip and zoom, go backwards, duck through his legs and never once fall off the Magic Carpet.

Highest of the High

The South, in general, is not known to be a ski destination. Sure, you can see a madman UNCW professor cross-country skiing the beach in a YouTube video, but by and large, the South does not a ski resort make.

Except here in North Carolina.

North Carolina's ski resorts, few they may be, are the highest this side of the Rocky Mountains. Three of the state's eight ski areas are over a mile high; the next highest in the East is in West Virginia. All but two of our resorts are higher than Vermont's lauded Killington Ski Resort.

The steep, challenging slopes of Beech Mountain Resort, as well as their brewery, bunny slope and freestyle terrain park stand at an elevation of 5,506 feet, much higher than the 50-foot Sugarloaf sand dune in my home county. On the morning we're to hit the slopes, we stop off at Fred's General Mercantile, a combination grocery store, ski shop and restaurant in the town of Beech Mountain, right about a mile high.

As your elevation increases, the temperature decreases, keeping Beech Mountain cooler than surrounding towns by six degrees or more. In winter it's cold here, brutally so, but in summer it's quite pleasant, so pleasant the town's only clocked in above 79 degrees a few times, reaching a balmy high of 81 degrees.

I Faced An Icy Death So You Don't Have To

That sounds a lot more dramatic than what really happened, because what happened was this: I took a ski lesson and didn't fall on the bunny slope, then I tried, along with a pair of fellow novices, to ski to the lift to the slope where little kids were shredding (or whatever one does on skis); the slope getting to the ski lift to the actual slope was more than I could handle and I tried to turn, forced a snowboarder to dodge the human missile named Jason Frye, spun, skied backwards for a dozen yards (I was impressed), and fell.

I decided this was not the death I was meant to die, so I went to the brewery in the ski village and had a couple of beers.

All This Snow Can't Go To Waste

The next day, we visited another ski resort, Sugar Mountain. I opt for tubing over skiing. Tubing is something I know. When I was growing up in West Virginia, my dad would bring home an inner tube from a coal truck tire and we'd over-inflate it, douse it with Pam cooking spray, and shoot down the mountain for as long as the snows held. These tubes are a little different. Wrapped in a nylon skin with handles on top and a hard plastic bottom, they careened down a set of tracks Sugar's ski wizards had built. It was a quick, fun ride, but nothing so burly as the let's-plunge-over-that-hill rides of my youth. It was just my speed. And so, like a little kid, I tubed and tubed, got tired and cold, had a hot cocoa.

While enjoying our hot cocoa, a few of us decided to try something new: snowshoeing. I was cold and a little wet from some snow that made its way past three layers of jackets and under my collar, but the Eagle Scout, adventure-book-reading, *White-Fang*-loving part of me spoke up. "You live in the South," it said, "when will you have another chance to snowshoe?"

Next thing you know, I'm strapping myself to a pair of contraptions that *look* like the snowshoes I'd imagined as a kid, but they were so much more. We learn to walk in them, clomping through the snow, feeling the shoes swing about on our feet, several of us taking to the wide-stanced, loping gait quite easily (as it turns out, I can walk like a Sasquatch quite well). We dig the tiny set of claws on the bottom into an icy slope to practice going up and coming down and we all fall once, then we set off, walking along the edge of the ski slope.

I'll admit it, skiing was scary, well, skiing — inasmuch as I skied — was scary, but this, walking at the edge of the slope with snowboarders schussing by in a neon blur and skiers hurtling downhill just a foot or two away, was downright unnerving. After a few minutes I fell into a rhythm, just like in hiking, and the sound of the snow machines fell away and it was just me and the snow, the crunch and squeak of my footfall, the gentle clack of the snowshoes with each step. We hiked up the mountain, rested and watched some snowboarders try to execute ambitious tricks, then retraced our steps and returned to the lodge.

Even though all I did was ride an inner tube and go for a short walk, I was exhausted and I wanted nothing more than a shower and a disco nap.

Dinner that night — a beer tasting and wood fired pizzas at Boone's Lost Province Brewing Company — delivered all those electrolytes I was missing and filled me with hot bread and cheese, so I went to bed a pretty happy camper.

What I Learned

Winter in the mountains is not like winter on the coast. When I arrived it was one degree and there was a 35 miles per hour wind blowing. That's deadly cold and my wardrobe is ill-prepared for that sort of weather.

Skiing is not a sport I can take up as a 38-year-old man. I tried skiing once in high school, but that trip was mostly about drinking cheap beer and trying not to get caught than it was about skiing.

There's something special in the combination of a frosty brew and a foot of snow on the ground. Every beer I tasted, from Beech Mountain Brewing Company, Lost Province and Appalachian Mountain Brewing, was made somehow more perfect by the snow and cold outside.

Even though I wasn't Mount Everest high, I still got ice in my beard.

Ice in your beard is hard to get out.

Whether you ski or not, the North Carolina mountains in winter are worth the trip. Between tubing, snowshoeing and the cozy heat of a mountain cabin, you'll find plenty to do and plenty to keep you coming back.

If you don't ski but want to learn, our resorts are the perfect place to build and hone those skills. And if you ski but haven't for a long while, these are some good places to knock off the rust.

With or without the aid of the ski patrol, Jason Frye is an intrepid soul who writes regularly about food and culture for Salt *magazine.*

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Beech Mountain Tourism (www.beechmtn.com)

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By the Numbers:

Ski Beech, Beech Mountain—5,506

Cataloochee Ski Area, Maggie Valley—5,400

Sugar Mountain Resort, Banner Elk—5,300

Hawksnest, Banner Elk—4,819

Wolf Laurel, Mars Hill—4,700

Sapphire Valley, Sapphire, NC—4,300

Scaly Mountain Ski Area, Scaly Mountain—4,025

Appalachian Ski Mtn., Blowing Rock—4,000

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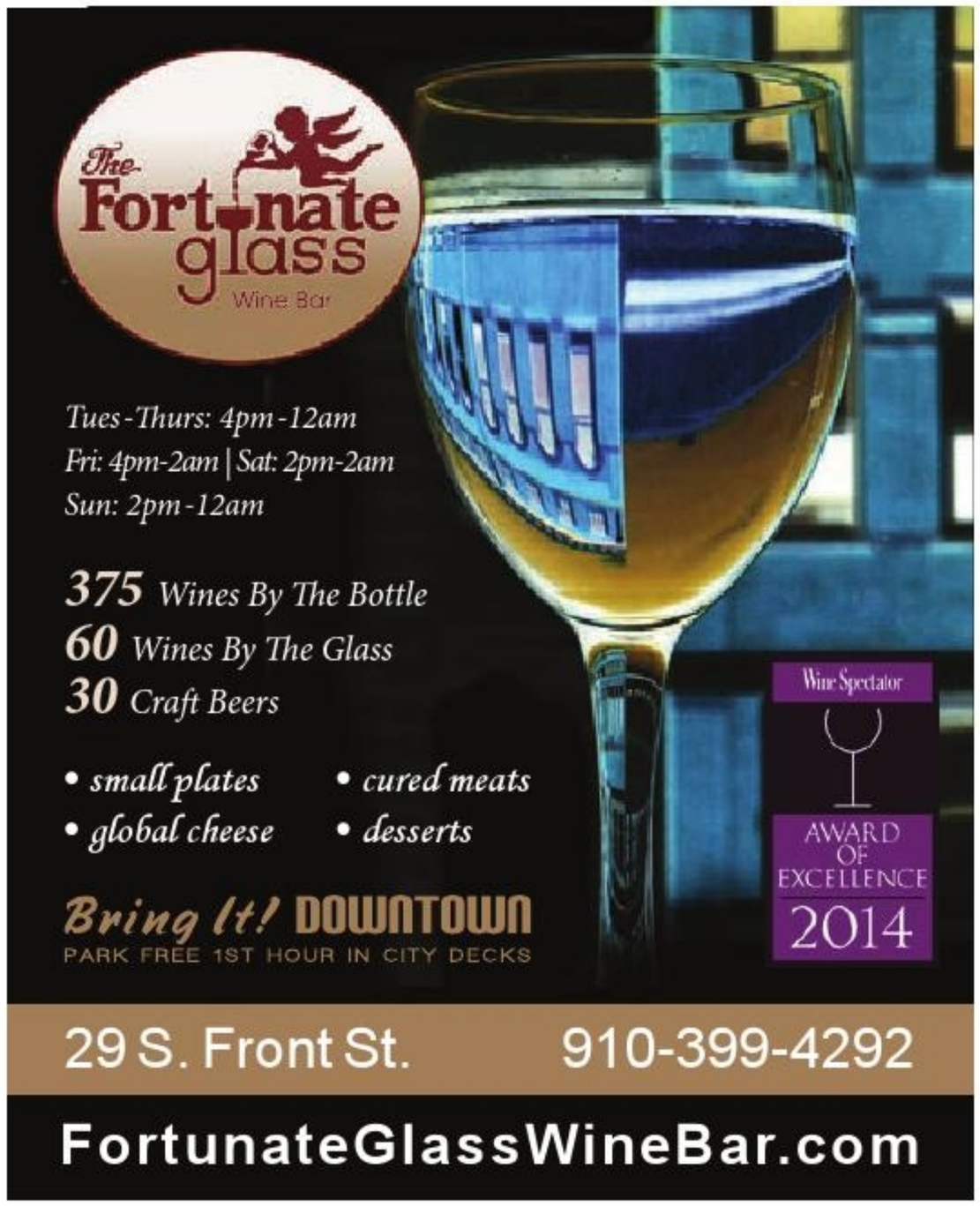

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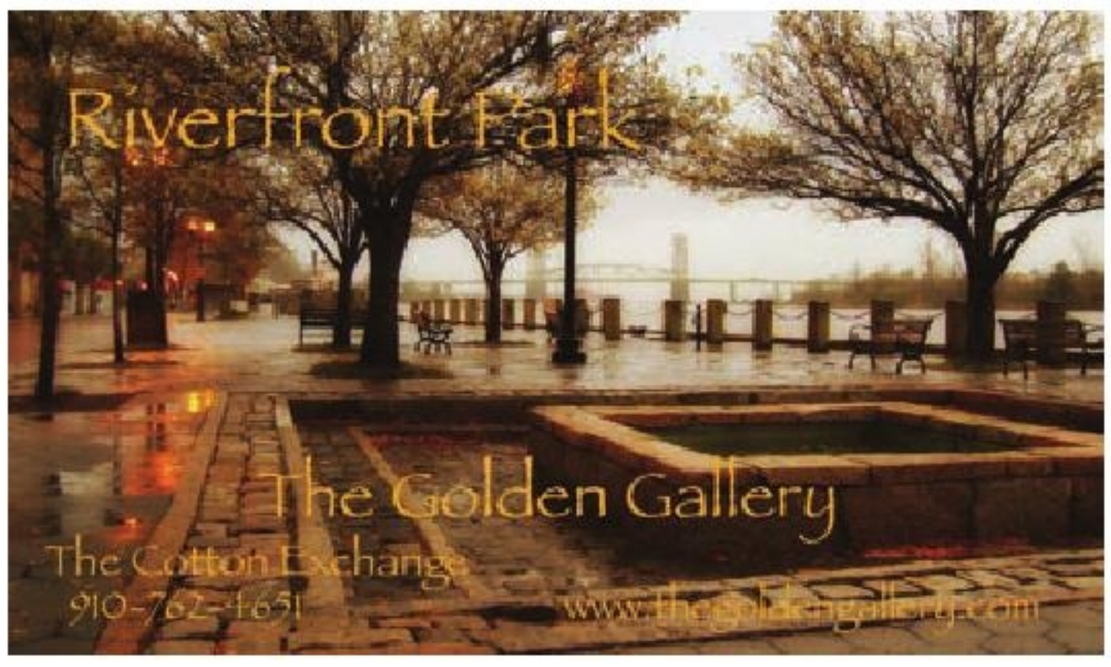

For Love of Jameson

The dog who rescued me

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESEY OF ANTHONY DAVID LAWSON

By Anthony David Lawson

Like many people of this generation, I had suffered a staggering case of arrested development.

There I was, in my late 30s, living my life with the sensibility of a teenager. Living paycheck to paycheck, eating whatever I wanted, although I certainly wasn't going to exercise to compensate. Drinking whenever I could and staying out until 2 a.m. I never tried to drive home drunk because I hadn't owned a car in seven years. (Yes, it really was that hard for me to get regular oil changes.) So basically, the last ten years had been a blur, leaving me a very overweight 36-year-old man-child.

All that changed when I got Jameson.

My mom had called me and said she needed my help finding a barbecue restaurant. I asked her if they didn't sell barbecue in her own town. "No, the owner has a golden retriever for sale that I want to look at," she told me.

So we drove out to this haven of shredded meat and met with the owner. He took us out back and led us to his truck. The back hatch was open and inside were three golden puppies, two boys and a girl. My mom knew which one she wanted but hesitated when the owner informed us that the "pick" was still available for a little extra. Faced with this decision, my mom called out the name she had already chosen.

"Come here, Chase," she said.

And the puppy she had first chosen waddled over to her.

During this exchange, the small girl pup had made her way over to me. Bear in mind I had no intention of buying a dog that day — or ever having a pet, for that matter. I could hardly take care of myself; I really didn't need another living creature depending on me. So with the invulnerability of the uninterested, I picked her up for a quick pet while my mom made up her mind.

When she laid her tiny head against my chest, I immediately thought of the amount of money in my pocket. For once I had tucked away a little extra, and had even bought myself a nice bottle of 18-year-old Jameson the day before. It wasn't a decision made lightly. We went inside to have a meal and discuss. My mom thought it was a great idea, but I wasn't as certain. I was very aware of how irresponsible I was. But the thought persisted that I could not leave the restaurant without that puppy in my arms.

As we drove away, Chase was curled up in the small dog bed my mom had brought with her. Nestled beside him was his sister, whom I had just purchased. (Before you start feeling sad for the pup we left back at the barbecue joint, my mom's friend went there the next day and bought him. His name is Bentley, and the siblings reunite frequently.)

"What are you going to call her?" my mom asked.

I thought of the bottle I had sitting in my apartment and named her after my whiskey of choice.

"Jameson," I said.

I wanted the best for my little girl from the very beginning, so I had to be more conscious of my spending. For the first time in ages there was a positive balance in my checking account. I was forced to walk up and down five flights of stairs every day to take her for walks. The apartment building I lived in had an elevator, but it hardly ever worked. As for the apartment, it was plenty big enough for me living by myself, but not for a growing puppy.

It was about that time that I was struck with the realization that I was now a single dad. So I took on a roommate and moved into a bigger place, one farther away from the main roads. (I was very paranoid.)

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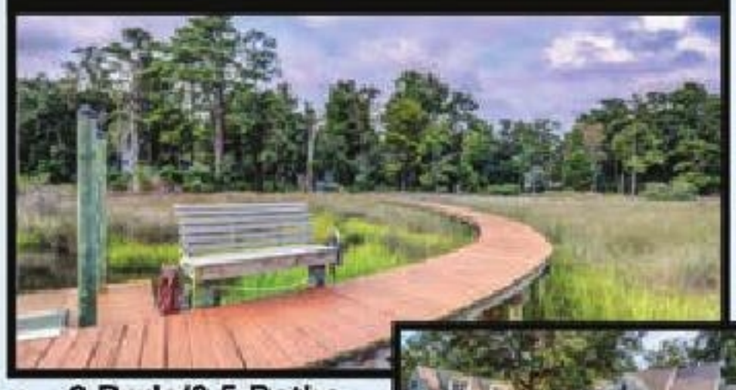

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One day Jameson cut her paw and started bleeding profusely. I panicked, and because I didn't have a car, I phoned the cab company to take me to the vet. The cab arrived but the driver refused to take me anywhere because I had a dog; the company refused to send another cab. Fortunately, my downstairs neighbor came to the rescue and Jameson was fine. I never used the cab company again, and the next day I started the process of obtaining the driver's license that I had not had for seven years.

During those seven years I walked everywhere but still managed (with all the junk food and booze) to balloon past 350 pounds. Around that time it seemed that friends, my age and younger, were being hospitalized and, even worse, dying.

I couldn't imagine who would look after Jameson if I was gone. Sure she loved her visits to my mom's house to see her brothers, but my mom spoils her like any grandmother does her grandchild.

I had already cut back on my drinking out of fear of being inebriated in a moment that Jameson might have an emergency, but I made the choice to cut alcohol out of my life completely.

For my 36th birthday I invited friends to help me drink the Jameson (whiskey) I had bought the day before Jameson (the dog). A symbol that I wouldn't need another drink ever again.

Although I always fed Jameson the best food, I continued eating garbage. And she was never allowed to eat off my plate. Once I was sober and thinking clearly, I knew that I had to start feeding myself meals that didn't solely utilize the microwave and a can opener. I started shopping the outer perimeter of the grocery store and discovered the glory that was the deli and fresh meat counter. Before, I would defrost the pound of hamburger I was going to add to its Helper.

Another sure sign that my development was no longer arrested was that I broke out the Crock-Pot I had been given years earlier. You may not understand why this was a big deal for me: I actually had to plan ahead for a meal. Until then, the longest wait time I had for a meal was when the pizza delivery place was busy.

For the next two weeks I was thrilled with the prospect of throwing ingredients together into the Crock-Pot, walking away to do errands or go to work and coming home to a ready meal. I had lost weight before, but always used to tire of the limited options I allowed myself. I sought out to do all the things I didn't think I could do.

Which brings me to today. I had always been terrified of cooking meat. I didn't think I had the skill or knowhow and was afraid I'd end up poisoning myself. But I had a nice lean Denver cut steak in my fridge that needed to be cooked today or thrown away. So I did some research and set to my task.

I rubbed the steak down with salt and pepper and let it sit for forty minutes. I heated up a small bit of oil in my frying pan and seared each side for five minutes. When I sliced into the steak I was fully prepared for disappointment. What I saw, however, was the perfect amount of pink.

And as for taste, well, it was the best tasting steak I had ever cooked.

As I ate my meal, I looked over at Jameson lying down (she never bothered me at meal time because she knew there was nothing in it for her). I thought, What the hell?, and as a thank-you for leading me to this day, just this one time, I gave her the last bite.

Anthony David Lawson has been acting, writing and directing in Wilmington for the past 14 years. He can next be seen in Panache Theatrical Production's version of Santaland Diaries *at Red Barn Studio Theatre.*

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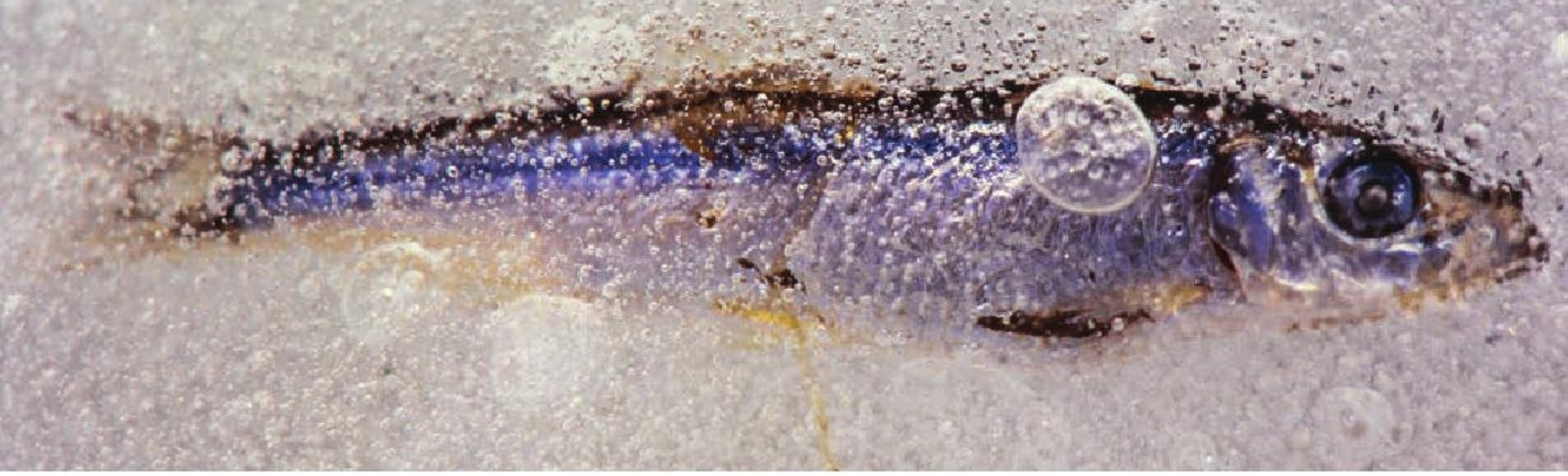
Winter Fishing

In a frozen swamp, lessons come in unexpected ways



By Bill Thompson

I don't remember exactly how cold it was during the first week of January 1955, but I do remember that it was cold enough to freeze the little creek that ran behind our house down on the edge of Bogue Swamp. There had been a little dusting of snow, just enough to close school. The time off gave my friend Clarence Register and me the opportunity to explore the swamp. Clarence said we were "in search of adventure."

Just enough snow had collected on the fallen leaves down by the creek to allow for the creation of footprints but not enough to make snowballs. Snow in southeastern North Carolina is not only rare; it is wet and icy — not fluffy — and in such a minuscule amount that trying to make a snowball is more like making a mud pie.

The swamp and the creek were familiar sites for Clarence and me. We spent much of our boyhood summers trekking through the soft ground only slightly hampered by protruding cypress knees and ubiquitous palmetto bushes. The previous summer we had made creative use of the upturned stumps of trees that had been blown over by Hurricane Hazel as the monumental storm descended on our watery playground. The roots of the trees stood on edge, thick mud and vines clinging fiercely to the grotesque protrusions that emerged in the wake of fierce winds and rushing water. In our youthful imaginations those roots became forts, barricades to hide behind as we assaulted each other with clods of dirt and fired fusillades of imaginary bullets from broken tree limbs that just happened to look like rifles.

But that was summertime play. What can you do in a frozen swamp in the winter?

"You reckon we could catch any fish in that creek?" wondered Clarence.

"I don't know," I responded. "I read about folks up in Minnesota cuttin' holes in the frozen lakes and catching fish through the holes. I reckon fish don't care how cold it gets long as they can find something to eat. Prob'ly not too choosy about what they eat in a froze-over lake since they ain't got a big menu to choose from up there. 'Course, I never have figured out how fish got a taste for worms anyhow. They can't dig 'em up by themselves. Fish ain't got no hands and worms ain't going to jump out of the ground and into the water."

"Well, the creek ain't froze solid nohow. That's just a thin cover," he said as he threw a fallen pine bough into the creek. The pine needles were weighted down with icicles and broke through the thin ice of the creek before quickly sinking into the water.

"Hey, I bet I know how we can catch some fish!" Clarence shouted. "My Uncle Leroy told me that him and my daddy got a ticket from the game warden for dynamitin' fish. Said they took a stick of dynamite and throwed it in Lake Waccamaw and it knocked the fish out just like you had hit 'em with a stick. Said they just popped up to the top and you could just scoop 'em off the top of the water with a net."

"I don't know. Never heard of such thing," I said. "Sounds too easy. 'Sides, we ain't got no dynamite."

"I believe I got something that'll work, though," he said as he reached into his jacket pocket. "Right here is something almost as powerful as dynamite: a cherry bomb and a M-80. Some I got left over from shootin' off firecrackers on New Year's Eve last week. These things are powerful! Mama said they was too dangerous to have around. She said Daddy shouldn't have bought 'em since they was illegal and he was settin' a bad example for me. But he let me shoot off some of 'em and I just kinda held these back after the New Year's celebration. She don't know I got 'em. She'd whip my butt if she knew."

Clarence immediately took out a box of matches, lit the cherry bomb and tossed it into the creek. The fuse quickly fizzled and lay impotent on the thin ice. With hardly a pause, he took the big M-80 and tossed it into the creek. The thin layer of water that had formed over the ice caused that potential explosion to fizzle as well.

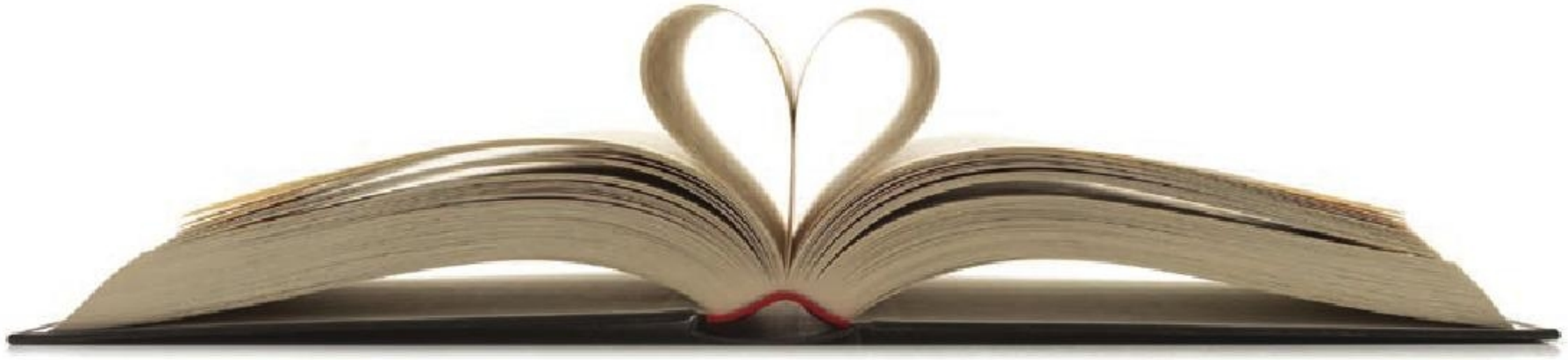
"Well, that won't too good of a idea," Clarence said as he looked at the two large firecrackers still resting on the thin layer of ice. "Won't fair to the fish anyhow."

Yep, 1955 was a good year to be 12 years old. Wisdom accumulated with every experience.

Bill Thompson is a frequent – and wise – contributor to Salt *magazine.*

The First Time Again

Good words and friendly advice from one who has been there



By Wiley Cash

My friend Taylor Brown's new novel, *Fallen Land*, is now available wherever books are sold. It's about an endangered couple on horseback heading south through the burned-out landscape in the wake of Sherman's March. It's a great book that has been compared to novels by Cormac McCarthy and Charles Frazier. It was released on January 12, so there's a good chance you've already heard of it.

But at this moment, January 12 remains in the future. Right now, as I take down the notes that will eventually comprise this article, Taylor and I are eating lunch at SeaLevel City Gourmet in Wilmington. It's mid-November, almost two months before the official release of *Fallen Land*. The copies of the novel that sit on the shelf at a bookstore or library near you are not yet printed. On this November afternoon, *Fallen Land* is a book that doesn't quite exist, even though Taylor thought it was over and done with the minute his editor accepted the final revision.

"That's what surprises me," Taylor says. "I spent years writing this book, and I'm still waiting for people to read it. No one's read it but my agent and my editor."

My mouth is full of a spicy California roll, but if it weren't I would tell him that what he's just said isn't quite true. I've read it, and I wrote a blurb for the cover that says something to the effect of "Holy moly, this book is great." Critics from *Kirkus Reviews*, *Library Journal* and *Booklist* have read it too, and they all gave it starred reviews, the industry version of my "holy moly" praise. But I understand what Taylor means, and I know how he feels. My agent sold my first novel, *A Land More Kind Than Home*, in November 2010; it was published in April 2012.

What does one do with the time between the final revision and publication day? Start a new book? Figure out ways to promote the book that's about to be released? Worry? If you're Taylor Brown, you do all three.

Taylor didn't start writing a book after he completed his novel. He started and finished two books, and both of them have been sold to the same editor who purchased *Fallen Land*. If he wanted an indication of how his work and career are being projected by his publisher, he's been given the best indication he could have ever received. The editor was wise to invest in Taylor; not only is he a talented writer, but he's also a hustler.

He's already visited with dozens of independent booksellers across the South, introducing himself and handing out review copies of *Fallen Land*. Commonly referred to as a galley or an advanced reading copy (ARC), a review copy is the pre-publication version of a book that's specifically printed for booksellers, reviewers and bloggers. It's how the industry is made aware of books a full season before their release. Most writers hoard their review copies, or they hand them out to family and friends. Taylor gave his copies to booksellers who hadn't yet heard of his novel. They've heard of it now, and their readers will hear of it soon.

But even with all he's done to keep busy, Taylor has still found time to worry.

"Writing a book is a very private, personal experience that becomes a very public offering," he says. "Soon, anyone could read my book and

have opinions of it. That never crossed my mind while I was writing it. It's terrifying."

What can also be terrifying is the specter of the book tour. Writers have varied opinions on the topic. Some say tours boost sales. Others say they're a waste of time. I've heard one seasoned writer say that he believes book tours are designed to humiliate authors. I decide it's best not to tell Taylor about the first event of my first book tour, a Wednesday afternoon reading at a public library in Huntington, West Virginia, a rapt audience of four people, three of whom were librarians who worked at the library. The fourth attendee was a former student of mine who was there to witness the tragedy of my career firsthand.

I try my best to give Taylor advice that will lift his spirits:

Don't read your reviews, aside from the good ones. If you read bad reviews, lie and say you didn't if anyone asks. Say, "No one reads reviews anymore," then hide your tears.

Pack your toothbrush, deodorant and a change of clothes in your carry-on luggage. My luggage was lost when I flew to an event in Portland, Maine. I showed up at the bookstore in a T-shirt and a baseball hat. It was February. In Maine.

During the book tour, if you're staying on an air mattress in a friend's basement, be sure to leave the air pump plugged into the electric outlet. You never know when that air mattress is going to need a little juice during the night.

Always ask people how to spell their names before you sign their books. There are a lot of Aimees and Elisabeths and Ashlees out there.

We finish our lunch, pay the bill, step out into the bright November sun. The afternoon is warm.

"There's a lot more to writing books than just writing them, isn't there?" I say.

Taylor pulls his sunglasses out of his breast pocket, puts them on.

"That's true," he says. "I never imagined any of this – promotion, book tours, public speaking – when I was sitting at my desk, writing a book that I thought no one would ever read."

"Are you afraid of this ever feeling like a job?" I ask.

"No," he says. "There's too much mystery and magic in the act of writing for any of this to ever feel like a job. I have to remember that."

I agree with him. It's the best advice I've heard all day.

Wiley Cash is a New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released last year. He lives in Wilmington.*

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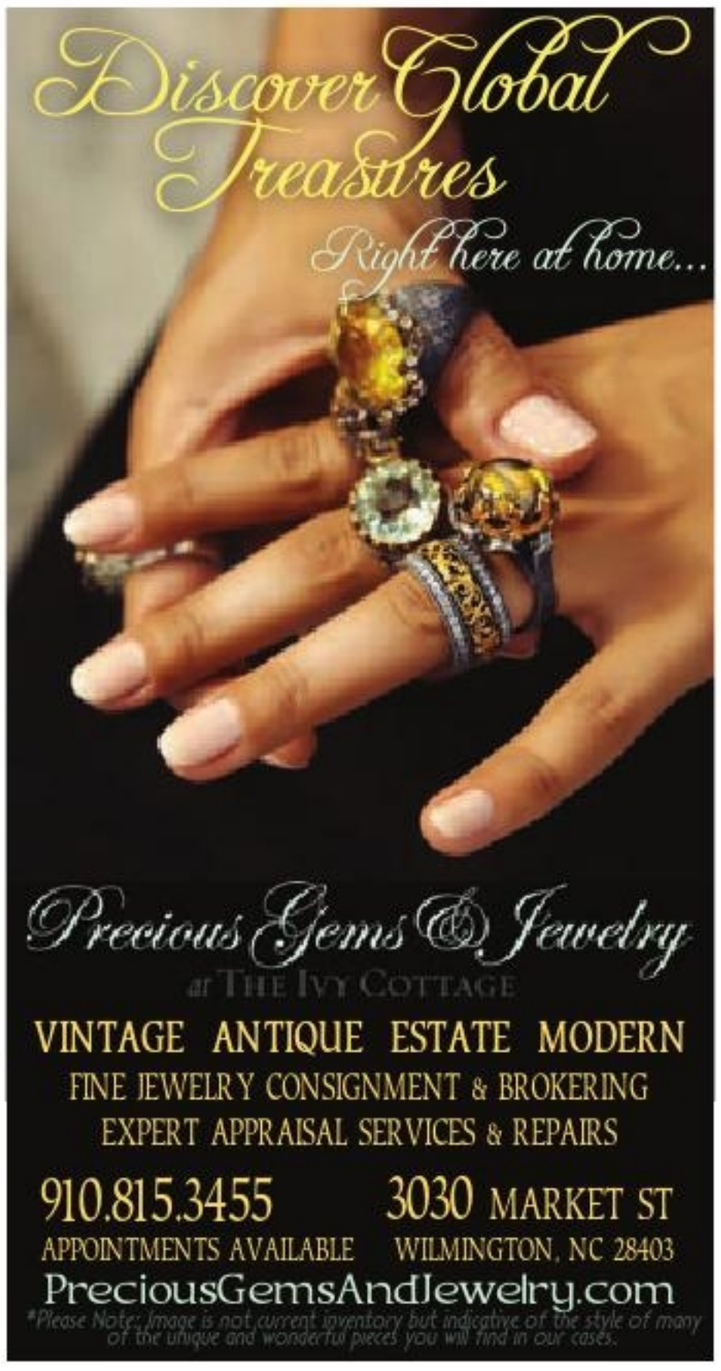
Life & Home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Great Horned Owls

Magnificent and mysterious raptors of the waterlands

By Susan Campbell

Mid-winter along the coast means cold temperatures and wet weather. And yet, despite the seemingly inhospitable conditions, we find a group of birds already preparing to raise new families: owls. Of the three species that are most common in our area — great horned, barred and Eastern screech-owl — the great horned owl is the first of the year to breed.

Being nocturnal creatures, owls are not as well-understood or appreciated as other raptors. They are known for their impressive ability to locate and catch prey under the cover of darkness using their phenomenal hearing and night vision. But few people are acquainted with their natural history. Great horned owls are adapted to breed very early, well ahead of their cousin, the hawk, at a time when rodents are plentiful and nesting locations are unoccupied by other species.

With a name that originates from the ear-like feather tufts on the top of their heads, great horned owls are among the most common owls in North America. They can be found in a variety of habitats across the continent and are considered the top avian predator in most ecosystems. Great horneds prey on small mammals and birds (including other owls), and are even capable of displacing eagles. The species is non-migratory, and therefore individuals are known to associate with the same mate year-round on an established territory. In our area, they are found in open agricultural fields, mixed grassy and wooded areas such as golf courses, as well as pine stands and coastal maritime forests. But until late fall, when they begin their distinctive hooting, they tend to go unnoticed.

Pairs begin courtship calling or "dueting" around Thanksgiving. The four-hoot reply of the female is somewhat higher pitched than the hooting of the male. Mates typically strengthen their bond by the end of December. In January they will choose a nest site, usually a nest built by another species such as a red-tailed hawk, crow or gray squirrel. Around large bodies of water, great horneds may use tall pilings as well, if a large enough depression exists in or among them. They make few improvements to the nest other than perhaps lining it with some of their soft body feathers. The female lays one to five eggs, and then both adults share incubation duties for the next month.

When the young hatch, they are covered in thick downy feathers but must be continuously brooded by the parents for the first two weeks, until they are large enough to thermoregulate independently. At eight weeks, the youngsters begin to make short flights away from the nest, but they are closely watched and fed by their parents for several more weeks. Like the adults, immature owls have gray, brown and black striped plumage — effective camouflage against the nest or vegetation during daylight hours.

Although hearing a great horned owl call at night along the coast in winter is not unusual, seeing one during daylight is an extra special treat!

Susan would love to hear from you. Feel free to send questions or wildlife observations to susan@ncaves.com.

Stairways to Heaven

Why would fish need a ladder? Because their very lives depend on it

Capt. Jot Owens

By Virginia Holman

When I was a girl there was a brilliant feminist bumper sticker (complete with illustration) that read, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." Its point hinged on the hobbled dependency implied by the word "need." A fish needs a bicycle? Its absurdity was its delight. I thought of the slogan again when the "fish ladder" was completed at Lock and Dam No. 1 on the Cape Fear River. A fish ladder? That's silly. Why would fish need a ladder? Well, because of mankind, of course.

Up until about one hundred years ago, North Carolina waters teemed with striped bass — also known as rockfish, striper, greenhead, linesider, pimpfish and squid hound. This thick-bodied silver fish sports seven or eight horizontal stripes that race the length of its scales. It's full of power and fight, which it needs to head upriver each year to spawn. How large was the striped bass population in North Carolina? A report from the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries in 1876 documented a single seine catch of 35,000 striped bass in the Albemarle Sound. "Many of these weighed 80 – 90 pounds, and 365 of them had a total weight of 23,785 pounds, an average of 65 pounds." By the 1980s, Atlantic striped bass populations were so low that Congress passed the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act to help bring the species back from the brink of destruction. A number of factors led to the decline, including overfishing, pollution and habitat destruction.

Here in the Cape Fear region, dams are often identified as the primary cause of the collapse of the striped bass fishery. Beginning in 1915 and ending in 1935, three locks and dams were built across the Cape Fear River to make the waters more navigable — but only for humans. Striped bass are anadromous, which is to say they move from saltwater to freshwater to spawn. Historically, striped bass in the Cape Fear region have journeyed from the Atlantic and up the river past Fayetteville to spawn. Without access to their preferred nursery areas, the population of striped bass in the region declined an alarming 90 percent. The same has been true for other anadromous fish such as shad, river herring, and the endangered Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon.

The obvious solution would be to remove these dams altogether. However, since the dams along the Cape Fear River impound drinking water for communities throughout the region, complete removal of the dams isn't a viable option because it would drop the water levels well below the intakes.

Enter the fish ladder and Lock and Dam No. 1. Designed and installed by the Army Corps of Engineers, this passage for fish (also known as a rock arch rapid) is a large terraced area that leads up to the dam. Within the terrace are smaller areas where water spilling off the dam is designed to pool. Because the slope of the terrace is gentle, fish swimming upriver can jump from pool to pool, resting in small pools along the way, until they eventually reach and surmount the dam. The first fish ladder was completed in 2012, and a collective breath was held. Would the fish climb the ladder?

That's where Capt. Jot Owens' collaboration with Cape Fear River Watch enters the story. Owens is a Cape Fear native who is one of the most sought-after charter boat captains in the area. He's also a tireless advocate for fishery restoration in the Cape Fear. Each year Owens organizes the Striper Tournament as part of CFRW's annual StriperFest bonanza. This tag-and-release tournament pairs anglers with seasoned captains. When the fish are caught, they are quickly fitted with a sonic tag to track their movements in the river. The first tags were implanted during the StriperFest tournament on January 14, 2012, just after the fish ladder at Lock and Dam No. 1 was completed. "The main

PHOTOGRAPH FROM JOT OWENS

thing we wanted to know that year was if the fish were going to be able to use the newly constructed rock arch rapids," says Owens. Then, using the "Department of Marine Fisheries listening stations, which are special sensors placed along the river, Cape Fear River Watch was able to track forty stripers tagged during the tournament." Finally, on March 28, 2012, the first striped bass in nearly one hundred years made it over the dam. Others followed, and striped bass were recorded as far upriver at Lock and Dam No. 2 in Elizabethtown, where the victory swim ended because Lock and Dam No. 2 doesn't yet have a fish ladder.

"We're working toward getting fish ladders installed at the two other dams on the Cape Fear," says Owens. Though restoring the fishery along the Cape Fear helps create a healthier river, Owens points out it also makes good economic sense. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservatively estimates that restoring the shad, river herring, and striped bass populations of the Cape Fear fishery will bring in $5 million dollars per year. Owens says "that figure climbs when you consider the positive impact on other species like flounder and red drum, which feed on young shad and herring."

Other areas that have striped bass see tremendous economic benefits. "The Roanoke River region can get up to 2000 visitors a day during the thick of striped bass season and we've got a bigger river here," Owens says. "Imagine the off-season benefits to our local economy and areas up and down the Cape Fear if we had a stronger fishery." He notes that off-season for hotels and restaurants is November through April. That also happens to be striped bass season.

"The striped bass, it's a fun fish to catch. They are very aggressive feeders. They are very explosive. They fight good. And they're really beautiful fish. They have poor eyesight, so you have some knowledge to catch them, and when you do it's a celebration. Fishermen come from miles and miles to fish for striped bass."

That can't happen yet. The fish need ladders at the remaining two dams on the Cape Fear, in order to make it to their historic nursery areas. So come on out to StriperFest. Help these fish get their stairways to heaven.

Want to learn more about restoring the striped bass to the Cape Fear River? Visit www.capefearriverwatch.org/news-events/striperfest-201.

Interested in participating in the tournament or heading out with Owens? Capt. Jot Owens, Inshore and Near Shore Guide:
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Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.

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Sheller

for Mary Ann Eskridge

Though her skin has turned to rice paper,
her breathing shallow and sometimes labored,
she climbs the weathered stairs and crosses
the long boardwalk that leads to sand and sea.
At her back, the old lighthouse rises from the grassy
ground surrounding the Coast Guard station,
emitting every ten seconds, four one-second flashes
of light. And scattered across the dunes, sea oats
bob their blades to the crash of waves
while gulls wheel and cry above the sheller's bowed
head, her slight frame covered by a coat so heavy
she staggers at first, beneath its weight.
Yet she keeps going, buffeted left and right
by a chill wind, winding her way to where a thin
layer of shells — angel wings and Scotch
bonnets, pen shells and olives — rests near the shoreline.
And some days, if she's lucky, she finds a whole
sand dollar with its Star of Bethlehem
pattern, the five doves hidden within this delicate
disk released only after the shell is broken,
but she will not break it. She will carry
it home in her pocket, picturing all the while
those unseen birds — their fragile wings spread
as if they are, already, in flight.

–Terri Kirby Erickson

Shackles of Forgotten Giants

In this excerpt from Fallen Land, *a brilliant debut novel by Wilmington writer* **Taylor Brown**, *a young couple heading south in the wake of Sherman's March finds brief comfort in a landscape upended by Civil War*

The rough track they were riding grew sandy for several miles through a thick wood, pines grown dark and arrow-straight from a floor of cones and straw. They crossed creeks that ducked and twisted through the terrain, and the trees latticed the sky so close-clutched and crooked they could hardly see the smoke or sun. The earth they rode was red, rust red, and when the trees would clear and the land open, they could see the dry creeks and washes that scored the hills like wounds.

Toward noon the sky darkened, as if by storm, and they could hold out on the meal in the bedroll no longer. The track opened onto a channel cut treeless through the wood. A railway, or what was left of one. Massive stacks of torn-up rail ties were piled, smoldering, as far as they could see in both directions. Blue towers of smoke hung over them, and where the tracks curved out of sight, yet more smoke spiraled out of the trees.

They looked from the sky back to the ground. In the grass, once-straight iron rails lay scattered, newly demented into violent angles, acute and obtuse, as if by the hand of some race of men with such cruel strength to torque them. But the power, Callum saw, was one of mind: The angle-pivots were blacked with heat, like smithy's work in the grass.

Ava tapped his shoulder and pointed across. Callum looked. There, on the far side of the tracks, a rail had been twisted around the trunk of a pine tree like an iron necktie, the wooden neck choked and scorched. Up and down the tree line he saw other rails tree-bent in like fashion, a whole piney wood manacled in iron. An entire railroad ripped up, ruined. The force it took, the sheer scale, dried up his mouth.

"Jesus," he said.

They sat the horse a long time, listening at the edge of the trees: nothing. They rode out toward the nearest pile of cross-stacked wood. It was red-hearted with heat, the outer ties ash white. They dismounted the horse and unrolled the blanket. They pierced the rough-cut steaks with whittled sticks and squatted side by side. The red flesh hissed over the coals.

"Wonder what future people will think," said Ava. "Finding all this. The trees gone, all these irons dug up from the ground. Hundreds of them. Thousands, maybe."

"Nobody's like to forget this," said Callum. "Not soon, I reckon."

"I don't know," said Ava. "You'd be surprised what people'll forget."

Callum looked at the loop-bent irons, imagining what people who didn't know better might think. How they might think them the shackles of forgotten giants, or the letters of a lost language. The ruinations perhaps of an angry god, bending a once-straight world to his will.

Ava turned her meat over the fire.

"They squeezed their fun out of it, you can tell."

Callum nodded. You could see they'd tried all sorts of shapes, testing their creativity. Mainly a single bend or loop, but there were a few triangles. Trees coiled as if by iron snakes. A couple of M's or W's — someone's initials, no doubt.

And there, down the line, a crude pentagram leaning against a tree.

"Reminds me of the Colonel, almost."

A kind of growl in Ava's throat. "What fun he had?"

Callum nodded. "You know, he was a tenor before the war. Like in a choir or something. And he could mimic a baby wailing like nobody else. We'd come up on an encampment, and he'd let out a cry, just out beyond the line where a single sentry could hear. It was perfect, just like a baby left all alone in the woods. He'd perfected it. Of course the sentry'd hear and come investigate. The Colonel'd cut his throat, then leave him there to be found come morning. He'd come back to camp just beaming after. So proud of himself. He was having the best time. He might do it two or three nights in a row, and each night the other sentries would stay closer to camp. Scared. Before long they were too close to warn of a force come riding through in the night."

Ava shook her head, as if to get the thought out.

"Bastard," she said.

They stared at the meat awhile, letting the smell waft up and around them. Callum's mouth was wet now, a hot spring bubbling up. After a minute, Ava pulled her steak from the fire and eyed it good.

"Not quite there, but I don't think I can wait."

"I ain't," said Callum, biting into his.

Ava watched him, a grin trembling across her mouth.

"How is it?"

Callum didn't bother to swallow first.

"Heaven," he said.

The steaks were unbelievably tender, like something for dessert. They ate them with their hands, tearing them with their teeth, and put more on the spits. They had two cuts apiece, then three, the red meat smeared across their lips. They smiled at each other, over this greatest of feasts, like wild things from the woods. Callum felt the fat and muscle warming his gut, like it might really replenish his thin-worn flesh, his beat-up spirit.

ORIGINAL TINTYPE BY HARRY TAYLOR

He got up and walked to the horse and retrieved the jar Lachlan had given them, unopened since the mountain storm, and brought it to the fire. Ava raised an eyebrow at him. He unscrewed the cap and took a big slug. He handed the jar to Ava and she did the same, her sip almost dainty in comparison. Callum felt one corner of his mouth turn up.

"Don't want to start him too early, huh?"

"Or her. Rather not birth me a little tosspot."

"I don't guess you got to worry too much. One thing I'll say for the Colonel: I never seen him drunk."

Ava exhaled through her teeth, handing him the jar.

"Little blessings," she said.

"He was a Irishman, now then you might have to worry."

She grinned, watching him have another slug. "It seems so. Was your daddy a big drinker?"

Callum handed her the jar, beginning to feel himself swoon on the meat and mash.

"I heard he had a taste for the poteen, that pot liquor they made, but he was never mean or nothing that I recall."

She handed back the jar. "I thought you didn't remember him."

"There's a couple things I do."

"Like what?"

Callum squinted one eye, holding the jar against his chest.

"His jaw. Scratchy and square and red, like a brick. I remember rubbing my face against it."

Ava nodded. "My daddy wore a beard, and when I was a little girl I used to sit in his lap evenings while he read and try and braid his chin whiskers. Thinking back, I can't believe he'd let me."

Callum leaned back, rubbing his nearly vacant chin.

"Tell you what. When this here beard comes in full, you can braid it anytime you like."

A wicked light came into her eyes.

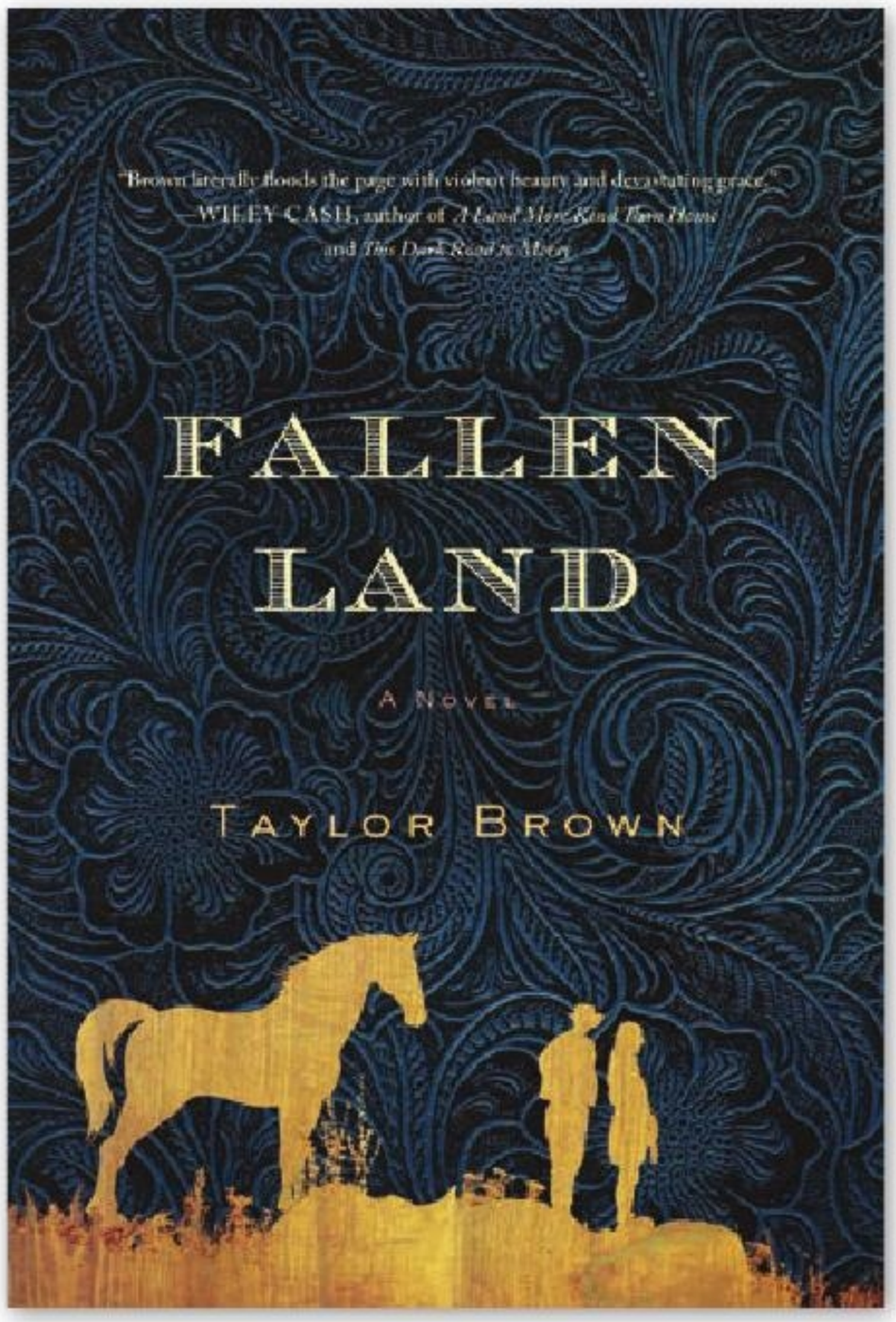
"Can I sit in your lap while I do it?"

"Girl, there's another thing you can do anytime."

Afterward they rose, sated, into the smoky twilight of the noon hour, a man-made dusk yet haunted by the soundless echo of screaming iron, roaring flame, the step and fall of marching boots. Callum knew the power that had wrought such damage upon the land was enemy to the power that pursued them, and so he tried to take some small comfort in the ruin all around them. However much he could. He walked back toward the horse, his blood thick and roaring. He boosted Ava onto the horse and helped himself into the saddle.

The horse moved out along the ruined railroad. Callum knew they should keep to the trees, but the smoking sun was upon their shoulders and necks, the fired rail ties radiant in the cold like a pathway made warm especially for them. The horse stepped carefully between the heat-bent rails, the cold grass crackling underneath his hooves. His angular shoulders flexed and relaxed, flexed and relaxed. The movement was uniform, soothing. Callum's eyes grew heavy, so heavy. He could not go to sleep. Should not. His head dipped. He caught himself and lifted his chin. Again. Again.

He let himself float upon his perch above the ground, lulled toward the dark and womblike beckon of sleep, distant, a seeming reprieve from the meanness of the outer world. He felt Ava slowly reach her arms around him, as if in embrace. She took up the reins, riding them toward a path into the sheltering pines, out of the open.


"Brown literally floods the page with violent beauty and devastating grace."
—WILEY CASH, author of A Land More Kind Than Home
and This Dark Road to Mercy
FALLEN
LAND
A Novel
TAYLOR BROWN

Callum dreamed. He dreamed of riding horseback through hills snow-laden and naked, no cover save a handful of leafless trees upthrust from the ground like the crippled hands of supplicants. Arrested, perhaps, in the final throes of some clawed-after resurrection. The sun was dark as a hole stoved in the white and featureless sky, and cold, an inverse of the self it lent to the world of men. A freezing wind skirled across the land, whipping powder in wind-torn tracings off the sharp slopes, stinging Callum's face with nettles of ice. He went to raise a scarf over his mouth and nose but found nothing on him, no clothes, his body naked to the pale flesh, the sharpened bone.

There was something on the horizon behind him. A blot, black as India ink, but alive, moving. He watched it bleed down the crest of a distant slope in the dark-flowering blush of something spilled. He watched it gather quivering and lake-like in the bottomland a single moment, only to burst suddenly forth in a shape wild and amorphous upon the hills, black-surging, emerging as it approached into a running of wolves. Beasts begotten of a single point and singular still, their eyes like carved marbles of ice with black stavings of sight by which to track him. The furred rush of them dropped into and out of sight as they tore across the hills toward him, leaving no prints he could see in their wake.

He turned and whipped the horse for speed, surmounting the nearest slope, dropping suddenly into a valley littered with the burned-out wreckage of machines. Strange machines wrought of iron and brass, none recognizable, all trailing long streaks of soot as though someone had tried to slog them to a place upon the barren expanse he didn't know where. He shot past them upon the dense-packed snow and glanced over his shoulder. He saw the hoof prints of the horse pooling ink-dark behind them. He realized the beast was melting away underneath him, giving out its black liquid of being with every step, the hounding wolves seeming to rise and multiply upon the dead-pooled remnants.

When the legs of the horse had given fully away, the belly struck the ground. The legless chassis of horse flesh rolled screaming underneath him, and he was flung forward across the snow. Then up and running, the wolves right upon him, and on the far side of the next-nearest snowdrift lay a huge and sunken hole like the mouth of a mine shaft drilled vertical to the core of the world. He stood upon the edge of the abyss and looked back toward the wolves, which were not wolves now but men on horseback wearing the flayed and gutless hides of wolves. As they came down upon him so hungry, so vicious, he knew if he stood his ground at the edge they would be taken with him into the well of darkness from which the twisted black hands had clawed so long to rise. The wolves crested the nearest snowdrift high and dark and mighty and the dream ended.

Fallen Land, a debut novel to be published in 2016, is excerpted by permission of the author and St. Martin's Press.

Taylor Brown's fiction has appeared in a wide range of publications, including The North Carolina Literary Review, The Baltimore Review, Chautauqua, CutBank, storySouth, *and many others. He is the recipient of the Montana Prize in Fiction, as well as a finalist for the Press 53 Open Awards, Machigonne Fiction Contest, Wabash Prize in Fiction, and Doris Betts Fiction Prize. His short story collection,* In the Season of Blood and Gold, *was published by Press 53 in May, 2014. Brown lives in Wilmington.*

American *Anthem*

How a boyhood dream became an album for the ages

By Philip Gerard · Photographs by Mark Steelman

Back when I was in sixth grade, I sat down one rainy afternoon and made a list of ten things I wanted to accomplish in my lifetime: *Go to Alaska. Write a book. Sail the ocean. Have an adventure.* I don't recall every one of them — but I do remember the last one vividly: *Make a record album.*

I was just learning to play the guitar and infatuated with such records as Simon and Garfunkel's *Sounds of Silence*, a long lovely poem of an album.

The idea of an album is that the suite of songs it contains is somehow a complete musical story, a finished artistic thought.

In college, I played in a country-folk-rock band called Renegade, performing covers by Jackson Browne, The Band, Eagles, Poco and the Marshall Tucker Band. But the only tapes I ever had of our performances are long lost.

So years pass. I become a writer of books and a teacher, but I keep playing music and writing songs. And the idea of recording my own original songs in some coherent mix keeps percolating in my brain. When I meet producer Jeff Reid at Music & Arts one Sunday afternoon, we get to talking. I'm ready to give it a try, and after we talk awhile the idea takes strong hold and won't let me go.

Later on when he asks me why I finally decided to give it a go, it's hard to put the reasons into words. "Because I always wanted to," I tell him. "Because I'm really just an enthusiastic amateur doing this to please myself. There's no pressure — I don't have to somehow 'make it.' I'm at an age when I can afford to do some things because I just want to."

And that's as close to the truth as I can articulate. I know — and he knows — that there's a yawning gulf of talent between people like James Taylor or Emmylou Harris and people like me.

But as the years have passed, my life in music has become far more complex and rewarding — mixed in with writing, performing at select times and places, collaborating with other players, and sometimes just getting the chance to jam with musicians who are really, really good.

So finally it's about the music, the special language of it, how playing with another musician is a kind of bonding dialogue that pulls out the best that is in you.

YAMAHA

And I'm starting to understand that working with a producer will be that kind of dialogue, a conversation about the songs and music that will wind up as a record.

"Yeah," Jeff tells me, again and again, "let's just have fun."

Jeff is about my age, a medium-sized laid-back guy with a shock of dark hair and a salt and pepper goatee. He dresses casually, jeans and T-shirts and open flannel shirts. He grew up in Carolina Beach, where his dad worked as the first site manager for Fort Fisher.

Jeff has a long history as a songwriter and performer and started producing music while still in high school, using a cassette recorder. He would record one track at a time, layering them back and forth to produce four- and six-track sets. He moved on to a Tascam reel-to-reel, and these days works from a home-built studio that features a complete computer array.

But Jeff remains old school. "I let the mics in the studio do most of the work," he tells me at our first session. "So what you hear is the mic and the preamp, no magic dust."

Before I visit the studio, I send him lyric sheets. Fairly crude, I admit — just typed verses, choruses and bridges, some with chording.

The first session is a chance to see the setup, to imagine myself playing in the studio, to hear Jeff's primer on the process. "Can you work with a click track?" he asks. I never have but I'm willing. Basically, a click track is like a metronome in your headset, to keep you on tempo. It's important to lay down a reliable bed of rhythm guitar (in this case) at the right tempo, so when we add other instruments the mix sounds better and sharper, not muddled and ragged.

"Can you play the songs through without singing the words?" he wants to know. Again, it's not something I do much, but sure, why not? It turns out that singing along without the guitar in my hands will be even harder.

Our goal will be to get all the songs recorded in basic arrangements: the right rhythm, the full bed of chording from start to finish, a "ghost" vocal track so that the lyrics and melody form a core around which to layer other instruments and effects. "The goal is to get the songs from here" — he points to his heart — "to here." The mixing console.

So I meet him one evening and he walks me through the control room, impressively outfitted with mixing boards and video monitors and a whole lot of equipment I don't recognize, configured in an L, with the long end of the L facing out a soundproof window into the studio.

The studio is the size of a spacious rec room, heavily curtained, carpeted, and otherwise soundproofed. In recording, you want to dampen echoes, control the purity of the sound signal as much as possible. The place brings to mind all those liner note photos from my favorite albums. The studio is a workplace, sure, but it holds a special allure. Here the instruments make their lovely noise, and songs come alive and are shaped into something that endures.

At my first session, Jeff has me simply play the first song through. He's listening for a whole lot of things: the general feel of the song itself, the tempo, the guitar playing style, the character of my voice.

Then he sets up a mic to capture the guitar. Since it's a rhythm track, no finger-style work, one mic will do. And I'm picking on my Martin D-45S, a cannon of a dreadnought.

We're starting with "Old Flatwheeler," a song about an old hobo I met in Barstow, California, while I was hitch-hiking through one nomadic summer during college. A "flatwheeler" is old-fashioned hobo lingo for a freight car with a bad wheel that jars your spine into jelly on a long haul. This guy was so used up, an emaciated alcoholic wreck, that the name seemed to fit. In the body of the song, I wanted to re-imagine him as a dignified, brave guy:

He's somebody's father or some mother's son
But nobody seems to know which one

I've been seated to keep the guitar in a uniform position for the mic. Now I stand to sing the vocal track. Jeff pumps a little reverb into my headphones so that my voice will sound live to me, and on Jeff's signal from the control room, I give it a shot. It turns out that singing to even a familiar song that you're used to playing is hard. I've underestimated just how much my fingers have always told my voice what to do, and now I gain a whole new respect for those singers who can hit a cue precisely and stay in perfect sync with the instruments.

But here's the thing: Singing inside that studio makes me feel talented and famous. It's an illusion, of course — in the control room later I'll cringe at the flats and sharps in my voice, the slight lisp I get from a nervous dry mouth. All I hear are the flaws, the stumbles, the missed cues. And Jeff will assure me that it doesn't sound nearly as bad to him. The flats and sharps are usually the result of running out of breath, from nervousness. You get better as you get more used to the process.

And anyway he's listening for *character* in the voice. He wants the recording to be honest, not a prettified version of me. He wants it real — and so do I.

And so it goes on in a process that stretches out for months, with weekly sessions interrupted by travel, work and other projects.

The first challenge is choosing the songs from among my notebooks full of songs. Some we try and they just don't work. I am after a kind of crazy quilt of the American experience — so we include songs about hobos, the Civil War, cowboys and outlaws, bluesman Robert Johnson, Cape Hatteras, Amelia Earhart, and hitting the open road.

We generally get the instrumental bed right after a couple or three tries, and on average by the third vocal take I'm getting "air" under my voice and making the phrasing work.

The hardest songs to tackle, oddly, are the slow songs — because phrasing requires patience and holding notes a little longer, and playing to a slow tempo is actually more difficult, requires more discipline and precision. If you crab a note, it stands out, rather than mixing in with the fast flutter of finger-picking or being masked by the reassuring strum of the rhythm guitar.

So on "Let Us Cross Over the River," a wistful ballad about the ending of the Civil War in the South, we take a few tries to get it right. Instead of finger-picking the basic track, Jeff has me try lightly strumming in time to the click track. Only after we have laid down a vocal accompaniment do we overlay the fingerpicking — and later, fiddle — and the result is lovely, if I do say so. The click track gives us a precision, allowing the vocals to wander a bit in accordance with the mood of the song, which is somewhat sad, but also relieved and thoughtful.

The title comes from a repeated line, "Let us cross over the river and rest in the shade of the trees," a gloss on Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's last words.

The hardest song to perform is a twelve-string finger-picking instrumental called "Delivering the Mail." The first recording has an uneven tempo, so I re-record it weeks later and get it in a couple of quick takes — then add a second slide twelve-string part that comes together in a single take. We don't add any other instrumentation — just some slight reverb. It's clean and bright just as it is.

We break down every song and put it back together, using the instruments both to create a rhythmic bed for the lyrics and to paint in the spaces between lyrics. We slow them down or speed them up. We move parts around. It gives me a sharp new perspective on "composition" — the act of arranging the parts to make a whole, each song containing surprises, little payoffs for the listener that amp up the emotional effect: drums coming in on the chorus, a harmony to color the vocals, a cello effect under the fiddle break.

So on the title track, a road song called "Far Away: An American Anthem," I lay down a basic flat-picked acoustic guitar and overlay that with splashes of Fender Telecaster tremolo to add emphasis, along with some fills and breaks. Originally I wanted to put pedal steel guitar on the song, and we record a track but finally decide it's overkill. I do play pedal steel on three songs, battling intonation problems when the strings go out of tune with all the changes of humidity and temperature back and forth to the studio, and at last wind up with a killer tag at the end of "Arizona Night," a song about a single dance that lasts all night long.

But often we decide less is more — as Jeff keeps reminding me.

In fact, the mixing process will be as much about taking stuff out as blending stuff in. "It's about layers," Jeff explains. Building the song from a reliable rhythm/vocal track and exploring it with other instruments and harmony.

He brings in Jim Ellis, a veteran studio player, to lay down piano tracks, and it turns out to be true: less is more. The notes fill in the right spaces but don't step on the lyrics or overpower the acoustic guitar.

Catesby Jones, whom I've long admired as a songwriter and guitar player, generously volunteers to play the drum tracks — and I didn't even know he played drums. We use the kit only on selected songs to give them a bigger band feel. Other percussion includes a bodhran (Irish drum), cajón, hand-claps and shakers.

Dargan Frierson provides acoustic bass and a variety of harmonies, and we recruit my stepson, Patrick Leahman, a talented jazz bassist, to give some punch to the title track. Later Rick Olsen from The Schoolboys also lends his voice and his keyboarding abilities to the process, using the synthesizer to create such sounds as a concertina for "Lunch in a Basket" and a deep brooding pad under "Amelia," an elegy to the remarkable woman aviator's last flight.

Deb Ross, who played fiddle for years in our band Whiskey Creek but has since moved to Greensboro (where she plays with the symphony), returns for a couple of sessions and chimes in on not just the songs we have played together but at least three she has never heard before the sessions: "Old Flatwheeler," "Kansas City in the Rain," the ballad of an outlaw, and "Captain Parker's Lament," the Battle of Lexington recounted by the commander of the Minutemen.

Deb's playing is haunting and superb — she writes the parts in the studio, even double-bows on "Flatwheeler" to give it an old-fashioned feel — and in a few minutes of playing elevates the songs by an order of magnitude. Her playing remains for me the highlight of the whole album.

In the end we record fifteen original songs in multiple tracks. "The Great Wide Open," for instance, a whimsical take on TV Westerns, requires four drum tracks, acoustic and electric guitar tracks, two pedal steel tracks, a bass track, and four vocal tracks. In the mixing process, the multiple drum tracks are blended into one; the others are adjusted for volume, and Jeff adds some basic electronic effects from a menu that mimics the old analog feel of the 1970s.

We don't re-record as many of the vocal tracks as we had anticipated — we want the sound to be real, full of feeling and energy, not with all the vocal character polished out.

Meanwhile I've arranged with Harry Taylor to shoot the cover art. Harry works with an old Civil War-era camera that captures images on glass plates. Since we want a retro Americana feel to the album, he finds the perfect location: the old Carolina Southern railyard in Chadbourn. We shoot there for most of a drizzly afternoon and entertain a steady stream of passersby and sheriff's deputies, curious about the old-fashioned camera and the silver-haired guy in the Cape Horner raincoat slinging a Martin twelve-string. David Southerland turns the final images into a cover that captures the texture of the songs: hand-made rough but pretty.

Jeff does the mastering process without me — assuring continuity and vocal consistency among the various kinds of songs, emphasizing the vintage feel, leveling out volumes to be uniform, using an "exciter" to emphasize certain frequencies, adding "compression," which lends a kind of three-dimensional depth and fullness to the sound and gives the illusion of volume without being louder.

"It's about making the song come alive." Jeff explains. "But then it's also about the collection — making sure that these all sound like they're coming from the same chapter in your life."

He hands me the master disc and advises me to listen to it on lots of platforms — my car stereo, my home system, earphones. And listen to it at low volume, as he does when he mixes. "If it sounds good at low volume, it'll sound good when you crank it up," he tells me.

And he has one final piece of wisdom before we send the album off into the world: "Make sure it's what you want, because you'll be listening to this album for the rest of your life."

And he has one final piece of wisdom before we send the album off into the world: "Make sure it's what you want, because you'll be listening to this album for the rest of your life."

And I listen and listen, amazed at how Jeff has captured the tunes in my head and made them come true on the instruments and in the vocals. He's been more than an engineer and producer — he's been a mentor who has taught me better how to listen to music and how to compose. And the 12-year-old boy inside me, the one who daydreamed of one day making a record album, thinks, "Yeah, I can do that."

UNCW Presents and *Salt* Magazine present the album launch of *American Anthem* on Saturday, February 13, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets: $5. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 962-3500.

Philip Gerard is the author of three novels and six books of nonfiction. His novel The Dark of the Island *is forthcoming in March 2016. He teaches in the Department of Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.*

A Moment in *Winter*

Something about the fleeting nature of our winter landscape makes it feel almost dreamlike — as if you could blink and miss it entirely. But look closely. The winter we know is master of subtlety, transmuting dewdrops into delicate ice crystals; our breath into sylphlike dancers in the crisp, cold air. In the wake of the occasional ice storm — or the midst of a rare, gentle snow — the magic and whimsy of the season are undeniable. Icicles are xylophones begging to be played, trees glisten like stars on Earth, and the glittering stillness of a world made new ignites our imaginations. We see the world with childlike wonder.

The Cape Fear Camera Club recently sifted through their archives and selected a handful of their favorite winter moments, each of which warms us to the core. Here, experience the ephemeral beauty of our own winter wonderland as captured by this talented lot of local photographers.

And don't forget to look outside. —*Ashley Wahl*

The mission of the Cape Fear Camera Club is to promote and advance the understanding, passion, and joy of photography by providing opportunities for education, skill development, picture-taking, competition, critique, and fellowship. For more information, visit www.capefearcameraclub.org.

Peter Langer • Sunset Gaurdian

Bob Thurston • Sunset Symmetry

Jerry Guba • Icy Azalea

John Wilson • Cold Ibis

Jo Ann Tomaselli • I Belong

Cyn-Dee Frohlich • Snow on Rocks

John Wilson • Marsh Mellow

Vincent Thompson • Ice Hot Peppers

Patty Conner • Morning Crystals

Jill Bernstein • Baby It's Cold Outside

Bob Griffin • 2014 Ice Storm Greenfield Lake

Karen Wiles • Whispers of Winter

Vicki Kohler • Fort Fisher Ghost Trees

Ken Newland • Freeom Is Not Free

Bill Bell • Cold Day at Wrightsville Beach

Ann Respess • Here's Looking at You

Les Conner • Snow in the Pines

Deb Etherington • Greenfield Tree Heron

Dash

Story of a Horse

How a rescue mare changed everything for the Weavers

By Ashley Wahl

Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Two years ago, when Jo and David L. Weaver started building on their ten acre tract in Rocky Point, they weren't planning to live there full time. They were happy in Wilmington, where home was a spacious two-story at the Country Club of Landfall with resplendent porches overlooking the eighth hole of the Marsh Course. The future Rocky Point cottage would be their weekend escape — a bijou hideaway surrounded by nothing but countryside.

And then Jo met Dash.

This is less a story of a house than it is a story of Dash, a rescue mare who stole Jo's heart and subsequently changed everything for the Weavers.

June 2014, not long after Jo, 58, began volunteering at the Animal Sanctuary at Poplar Grove, Sampson County Animal Control found fifty-four neglected horses on a farm near Dunn. Among the most critical was a swayback mare so starved that you could count her ribs. She began rehabilitation at a foster site until she could be transferred to Poplar Grove, where she arrived on a Sunday, Jo recalls.

"She was just a bag of bones," says Jo, who let out a deep sigh before describing what it was like to witness a horse in that condition step off a trailer. "I don't know how she was even standing up."

Rehabilitating a malnourished horse is a not a quick or easy process. Although Jo knew very little about horses, she spent upward of twenty hours a week with them at Poplar Grove while the getaway cottage in Rocky Point took shape. And as she watched the newest rescue gain weight and strength, Jo couldn't help but feel a deep connection with her.

The morning Dash met Jo at the fence where she parked her car

was when Jo realized just how attached to the horse she'd become.

A soft whinny was all it took.

"I was done. I was *done*. I was so damn done," says Jo.

Dash would need a forever home once she was healthy enough to leave the Animal Sanctuary at Poplar Grove, and Jo wanted that horse to receive lifelong care. She called her husband, David L. Weaver, of Dearybury Oil Inc.

"We can build a barn," he said.

And just like that, the Weavers began planning a new life, rerouting from country club to horse country in the blink of a mare's eye. By the time their 1,600-square-foot cottage and barn were completed, Jo and David had somehow acquired two more horses, Piper and Sam. Ellie and the burros would arrive post move.

Save for sentimental art and furniture collected over the course of twenty-five years of marriage, the Weavers purged much of what filled their 5,300-square-foot house in Landfall, which they put on the market and sold last year.

In some ways, downsizing was a challenge. But a smaller home allowed Jo to curate each and every room with exquisite attention to detail. Like railroad spike hardware on the kitchen cabinets, a gallery-worthy sweetgrass basket display in the dining area, and a ceramic stag head vessel sink in the main bathroom made by local artist Shayne Greco.

Then there's the view.

"It's paradise out here," says Jo. "We love it."

Twenty miles north of Landfall, inside a handsome cottage with poplar bark siding and a hipped metal roof, Jo Weaver is seated at a cowhide barstool scrolling through photos of Dash on her smartphone. Sally, Comet and Sirius Black, the excitable Norwich terriers who welcomed this morning visitor with a chorus of yips, have finally settled down, and on this sunny winter's day, four horses and a pair of mini Sicilian burros, Thomas and Luke, are feeding on golden piles of coastal Bermuda grass in the pasture beyond the kitchen window.

"Here it is," says Jo, letting out a deep sigh. She places her phone on the granite countertop and slides it toward me. "Her head looked

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humongous because her body was so emaciated."

The horse in the picture looks nothing like any of the horses here at Lucky Dog Farm, a testament to the dedication and compassion of the staff and volunteers at the Animal Sanctuary at Poplar Grove, says Jo, but also to the Weavers.

Before Jo walks me through the cottage — a bright, exquisitely furnished space with reclaimed wood flooring and an open layout outfitted with grand Oriental rugs — she tells me how she and David wound up with a barnful of horses, and how they discovered that Dash is racehorse royalty.

Having arrived at Poplar Grove altogether nameless, the horse that shaped this story was formerly known as Weaver.

"I was convinced they had set me up," says Jo, but the mare was named for a vice.

Soon after "Weaver" won Jo over, a Poplar Grove employee found a lip tattoo indicative of a registered racehorse, and a fellow volunteer helped Jo track a pedigree report.

She couldn't believe what they found. The mare who had nearly starved to death on a crowded farm in Sampson County was the granddaughter of Dash for Cash, perhaps the most famous modern sire in the American Quarter Horse racing industry.

Jo was outraged.

"How could a horse with that background end up in that kind of situation?"

Further investigation made her sick: Dash had foaled a filly in 2013.

"I had to find the baby," says Jo. And if, somehow, that horse was alive, Jo had to know that she was OK.

Enter Piper, the buckskin filly who, like Dash, was in such critical condition at the time of the farm bust that she was rescued on the spot. She was so weak she couldn't lift her head, and a festering wound on her shoulder would require surgery. Of course, this was assuming she survived the night.

As it turned out, Piper did survive the night. Debbie Bartholomew of Cape Fear Equine Rescue League

had brought the filly to her farm near Rocky Point for rehabilitation. Once Jo got word of this, she and Bartholomew arranged to reunite Piper with her mother at Poplar Grove.

"Dash immediately recognized her," says Jo, recalling that sweet November greeting. "I mean, she groomed that horse for two days straight. It was the most incredible sight you've ever seen."

Days after her arrival at Poplar Grove, the young filly would undergo her first surgery at the veterinary clinic at N.C. State University, which was paid for by funds raised by the children of Southport Elementary School and members of the St. James community.

"This was lodged in her shoulder," says Jo, removing a wooden spike the size of her pinky from a drawer beside the farmhouse kitchen sink.

Yes, the Weavers would also adopt Piper, who would undergo two more surgeries. And if they were going to have a horse farm, Jo might as well learn to ride. Which is how they wound up with No. 3, Sam, a spotted saddle horse from Kentucky.

After a quick tour of the cottage, custom built by Doster Building Company and decorated with rustic colors and pastoral artwork, we stop by the carriage house, a charming bedroom with cypress wall paneling and a fully stocked gentleman's bar.

Jo made the antique fishing lure mirror in the bathroom, perhaps a nod to her childhood on Myrtle Grove Sound. A book on the dresser reveals her ties to the Simmons Sea-Skiff, one of the most sought-after boats made in southeastern North Carolina in the twentieth century.

"My daddy was T. N. Simmons, Jr." says Jo.

Finally, as we make our way toward the horses — past a tidy goldfish pond and through a picturesque post and beam structure that Jo calls the Barn Mahal — Jo praises the friends, neighbors, trainers and

instructors who have helped her and her horses throughout this new and unexpected venture. Her barn manager, Debbie Karl, is practically family.

Still, her deepest gratitude is reserved for David.

"When we got married he called himself 'Lucky Dog,'" says Jo, who lets out a guttural laugh as she opens the gate to the pasture. "That's what's inscribed on his wedding band."

Thomas and Luke, the inseparable burros, look up from their hay as we pause to greet them.

"They're spoiled rotten," says Jo.

She speaks to each horse as if she or he is the most incredible creature she's ever seen.

First Ellie (horse No. 4), then Sam, then Dash and Piper, who are standing in a sunny corner, their thick winter coats gleaming.

"I don't know what people think about animals, but I know these two are grateful," says Jo. "They're happy as can be."

And then she falls silent, watching with awe as they finish their breakfast.

"This has been a crazy, crazy ride," says Jo, whose youthful green eyes fill with wonder when she speaks. "I never saw it coming, but now I can't imagine my life without them. This is really my life. My only regret is that I'm not twenty-seven."

ALMANAC

February

By Rosetta Fawley

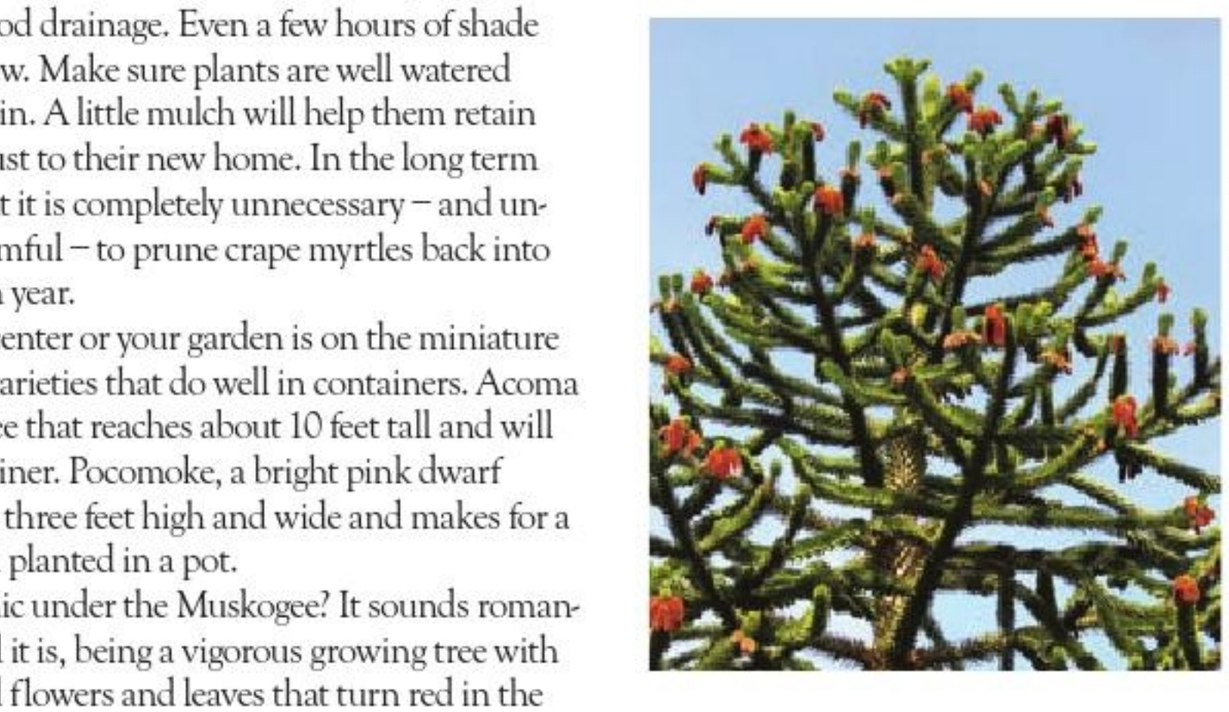
Crape myrtle blooms are said to be lucky flowers for Year of the Monkey people. Late winter/early spring is a good time to plant a crape myrtle while they're dormant, so add some to your garden for the Monkeys that you know. Single crape myrtles make wonderful focus points, or invest in a large number and plant an avenue for a floral, shaded walk or driveway.

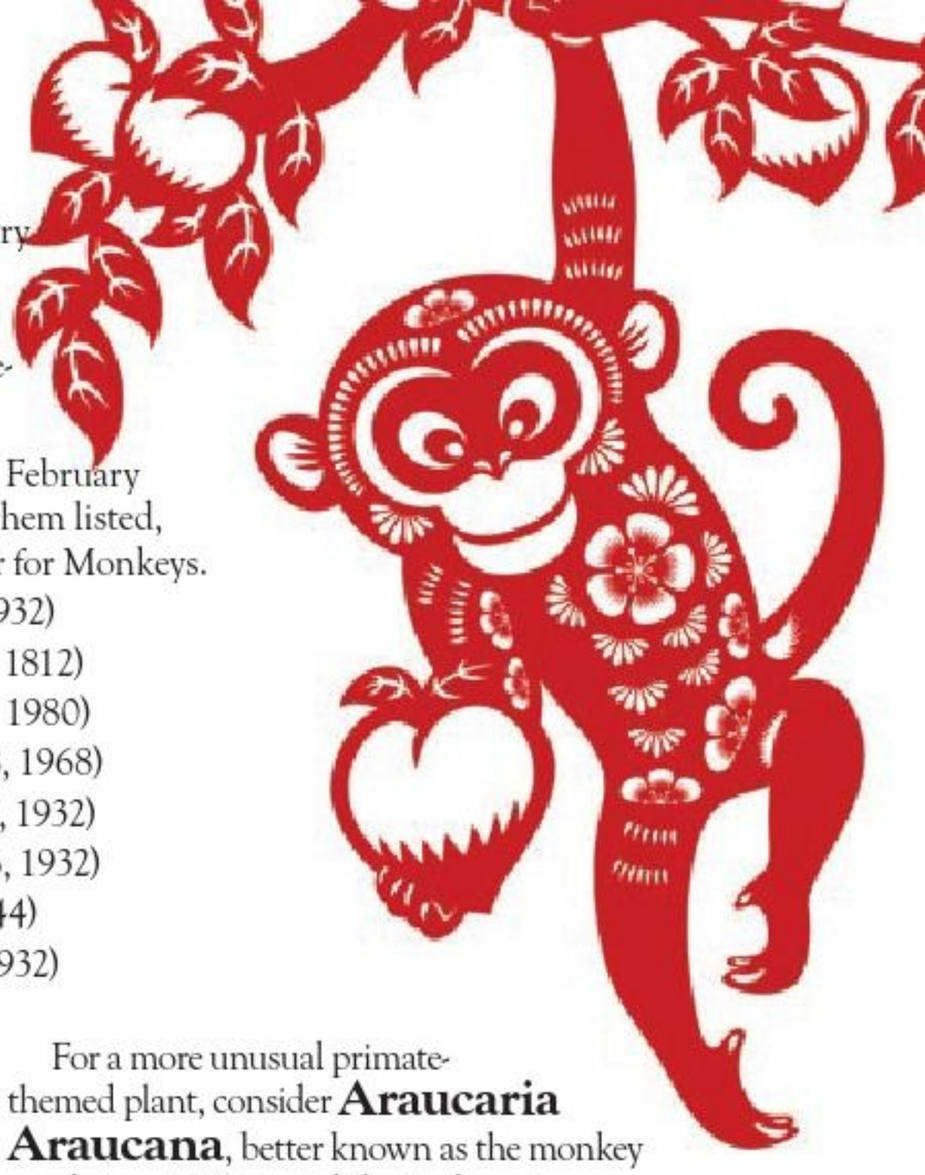
There's a wide array of choice out there, from dwarf varieties to 30-foot-high giants. Be sure to choose plants that are appropriate to the space you have available. All crape myrtles need full sun and good drainage. Even a few hours of shade will encourage mildew. Make sure plants are well watered before you put them in. A little mulch will help them retain moisture as they adjust to their new home. In the long term please remember that it is completely unnecessary – and unsurprisingly also harmful – to prune crape myrtles back into pathetic stumps each year.

If you're in a city center or your garden is on the miniature side there are small varieties that do well in containers. Acoma is a graceful white tree that reaches about 10 feet tall and will grow in a large container. Pocomoke, a bright pink dwarf variety, gets to about three feet high and wide and makes for a colorful accent when planted in a pot.

How about a picnic under the Muskogee? It sounds romantic, doesn't it? Indeed it is, being a vigorous growing tree with pale lavender-colored flowers and leaves that turn red in the fall. Muskogee is a variety that will top 25 feet if left to its own devices. If it's the peeling bark you enjoy, look at Tuscarora, Biloxi, Miami and Natchez. Whichever you choose, put it in a good spot for an outdoor feast.

If you're in the market for something in-between sized, opt for semi-dwarf 12 feet and come in a glorious spectrum of whites, pinks, reds and purples. Our recent cold snaps and our heavy humidity suggest that those gardening inland might want to look at cold-hardy, disease-resistant types: try Zuni for gorgeous purple blooms, great fall coloring and that lovely peely bark for which crape myrtles are famous. Zuni is a hybrid of the subspecies indica and fauriei. The latter is a Japanese subspecies, and perhaps it is no coincidence that the Japanese word for the tree is saru saberi, meaning "monkey slip," because of that attractive shiny bark.





The Chinese Year of the Monkey dawns on February 8. People born in a monkey year are gregarious, witty and highly intelligent. Of course they're also mischievous and fond of practical jokes.

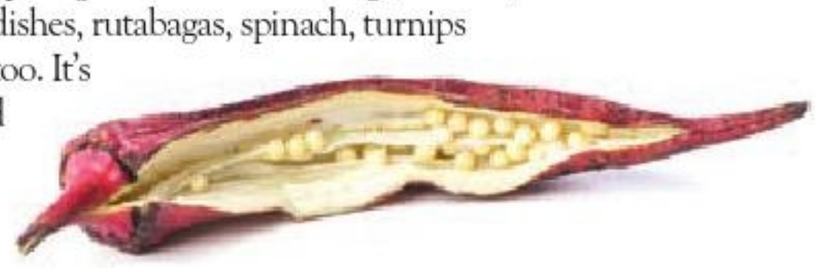
Here are some Monkeys with February birthdays. There are eight of them listed, because that's a lucky number for Monkeys.

Johnny Cash (February 26, 1932)
Charles Dickens (February 7, 1812)
Christina Ricci (February 12, 1980)
Molly Ringwald (February 18, 1968)
Elizabeth Taylor (February 27, 1932)
Francois Truffaut (February 6, 1932)
Alice Walker (February 9, 1944)
John Williams (February 8, 1932)

For a more unusual primate-themed plant, consider **Araucaria Araucana**, better known as the monkey puzzle tree. Native to Chile, its charming name coined in the eighteenth century by Charles Austin, was who commented of its spiny form that it would puzzle a monkey to climb it.

Monkey puzzles are suited to North Carolina's hardiness zones, being intolerant to extreme cold. They like full sun and even moisture. Their dramatic shape makes a great focal point in a large garden. Keep in mind that they reach over 70 feet tall and have a spread of around 35 feet. They're slow growers, though, so plant one to puzzle future generations of Chinese zodiac Monkeys.

Putting the monkey business aside for a moment: February is the month to start planting **vegetable seeds**. Keep them indoors or covered until they're established and spring has sprung. You can sow cabbage, carrots, leaf lettuce, green and bulb onions, radishes, rutabagas, spinach, turnips and dwarf and trellis peas. Tomatoes too. It's easy for trays to dry out quickly in arid winter air, especially indoors, so do remember to keep soil moist.



In February *by Alice Meynell (1847-1922)*

Rich meanings of the prophet-Spring adorn,
Unseen, this colourless sky of folded showers,
And folded winds; no blossom in the bowers;
A poet's face asleep in this grey morn.
Now in the midst of the old world forlorn
A mystic child is set in these still hours.
I keep this time, even before the flowers,
Sacred to all the young and the unborn.

To all the miles and miles of unsprung wheat,
And to the Spring waiting beyond the portal,
And to the future of my own young art,
And, among all these things, to you, my sweet,
My friend, to your calm face and the immortal
Child tarrying all your life-time in your heart.

Brightmore UNIVERSITY SERIES

A Diverse Program for Lifestyle Enrichment

"Qi Golf"
Presented by Keith Webb, Certified Practice Leader, Qigong, Tai Chi Easy
Monday, February 8th, 2016 at 2 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street
Want to improve your golf game? Then join us for a presentation that incorporates the movements and principles of Qigong and Tai Chi and applies them to improving your concentration on the golf course. These movement sequences are great warm-ups prior to playing a round, the breathing exercise promotes calmness, and the meditation practice promotes concentration. **RSVP by Friday, February 5th, 2016.**

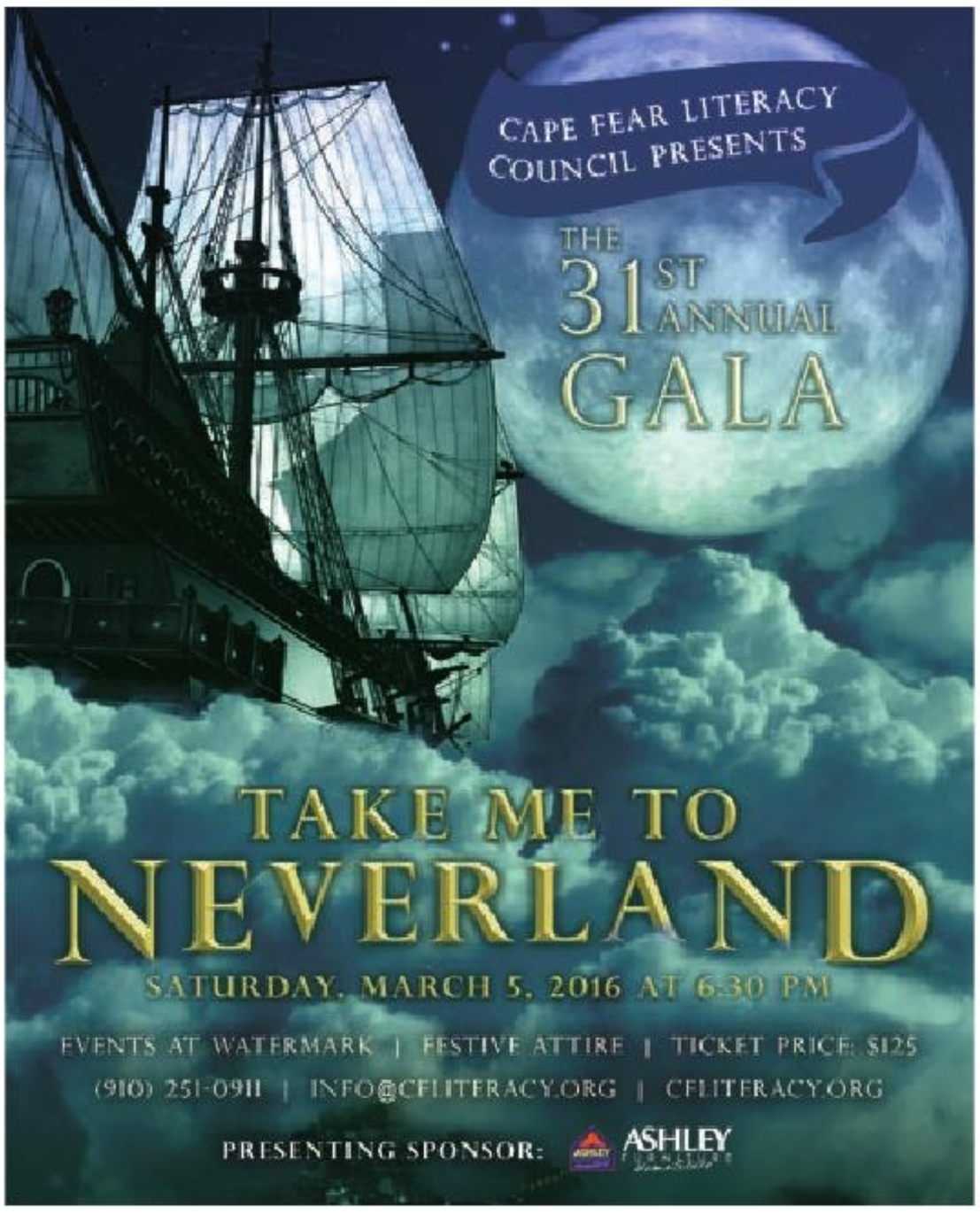
"Sweetheart Brunch" with Tom Noonan and Jane Clark
Presented by Brightmore of Wilmington
Sunday, February 14th , 2016, 12-3 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street
Treat the "loves in your life" to a special Valentine's Day Brunch with love songs and Broadway tunes performed live by Tom Noonan on piano with vocals by Jane Clark. Enjoy complimentary Mimosas, desserts and live music in the parlor prior to and after your brunch seating, compliments of Brightmore of Wilmington. Brunch: $15 Per Guest. Seatings are at 12 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. **RSVP by Friday, February 12th, 2016.**

"Italy": A Virtual Tour of Tuscany's Vineyards and Wineries
Presented by Dr. Joe and Jenny Alaimo
Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 at 2 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street
For the second part of our three-part **"Arm Chair Travel Series"**, join Dr. Joe Alaimo and wife, Jenny Alaimo as they take you on a virtual tour of the Wineries and Vineyards of Italy's Tuscany Region. Just returning from a two-week tour, the Alaimo's, both of Italian heritage, will share stories, video and general information on this beautiful area of Italy known for its wine and food. **Enjoy Wine and Olive Oil Tastings** while you relish in their fabulous adventures and the beautiful sites they captured on film. **RSVP by Monday, February 22nd, 2016.**

"Outdoor Screening of *The Age of Love*": Senior Speed Dating
Presented by Brightmore of Wilmington in collaboration with Cucalorus Film Festival
Friday, April 1st, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.
Brightmore Independent Living: 2324 South 41st Street
This is no April Fool's joke… you're invited to join us for Cucalorus' first warm-season Pop-Up Cinema. Enjoy a **FREE outdoor sunset screening of The Age of Love,** a documentary that follows the humorous and poignant adventures of thirty seniors in Rochester, NY, who sign up for a first-of-its-kind speed dating event exclusively for the 70 to 90 year-old. Food and Beverages will be available. Don't miss this fun event on the Brightmore of Wilmington Campus! **RSVP by Wednesday, March 30th, 2016.**

Reserve your seat for these FREE events by calling 910.350.1980.

Brightmore of Wilmington
2324 South 41st Street, Wilmington | 910.350.1980
www.brightmoreofwilmington.com


CAPE FEAR LITERACY COUNCIL PRESENTS
THE 31ST ANNUAL
GALA
TAKE ME TO
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SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2016 AT 6:30 PM
EVENTS AT WATERMARK | FESTIVE ATTIRE | TICKET PRICE: $125
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WILMINGTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Symphony Pops!
Sponsored by Brightmore of Wilmington & Carolina Bay, Co-sponsored by Audi Cape Fear
Classical Mystery tour
A Tribute to the Beatles
Saturday, March 19 | 7:30pm
CFCC Humanities and Fine Arts Center
701 N Third Street, Downtown Wilmington
TICKETS: 910-362-7999
www.WilmingtonSymphony.org

Wilmington Art Association

The Premier Visual Arts Organization of the Cape Fear Coast

CALL FOR ARTISTS!

See WAA Website for information to submit your work for the 34th Annual Juried Spring Art Show & Sale.

Juror is Chad Smith of Durham, who will also have a workshop following the show.

Joan McLoughlin, Fine Artist, Detail of "Victoria's Secret."

WAA also offers: Exhibit Opportunities, Monthly Membership Meetings, Special Programs plus Presentations, Socials, Field Trips, Paint Outs and Demonstrations.

Join Today & Support Local Art
www.wilmingtonart.org

Membership is open to artists & art lovers alike

BROOKLYN ARTS CENTER AT ST ANDREWS
The BAC and JONKHEER JEWELRY Present
PRECIOUS METAL
HANDCRAFTED JEWELRY & SCULPTURE
BY OUR REGION'S MOST TALENTED ARTISTS
ONE DAY ONLY!
SUNDAY, JANUARY 31
NOON to 6:00 pm
$5 ADMISSION
SATURDAY
FEB 20, 2016
noon–6pm
SUNDAY
FEB 21, 2016
noon–6pm
ART FOR ALL
50-plus local, original artists in the church and under the courtyard tent, Wilmington's fabulous food trucks, the BAC cash bar, and a courtyard coffee shop.
ADMISSION IS $5*
*GOOD FOR BOTH DAYS AND INCLUDES A RAFFLE TICKET

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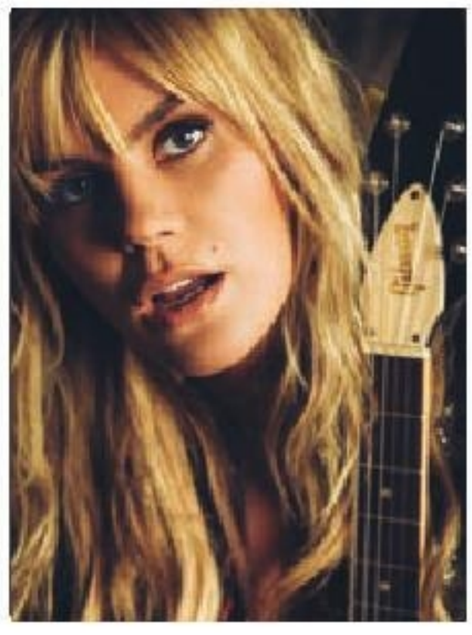
(910) 538-2939 | WWW.BROOKLYNARTSNC.COM | VENDOR INFO: Contact Jessica@BrooklynArtsNC.com

Arts Calendar

WindSync Quintet

1/22

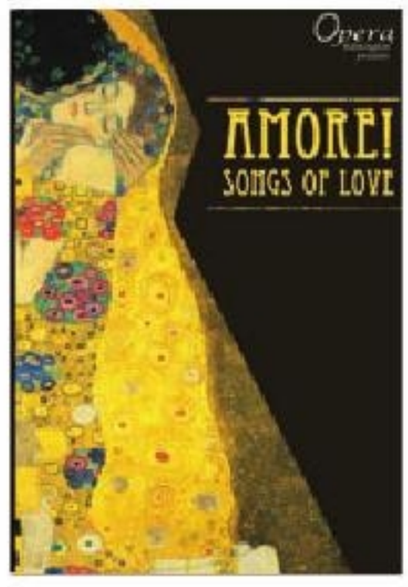


Grace Potter Live

1/24

Lily Tomlin Live

2/4



Amore!

2/14

January 2016

1/21 Concerts @ CAM
6:30–8 p.m. Molasses Creek, award winners from Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion. Admission: $5–15. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

1/21–24 Antique Show & Sale
7–9 p.m. (Thursday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday–Sunday). Shop a variety of antiques and vintage items from more than 35 vendors from 10 states. Includes furniture, jewelry, silver and glassware. Metal and crystal restoration specialists on-site. Proceeds benefit community charities and projects. Thursday's Preview Party benefits Mother Hubbard's Cupboard. Admission: $25/preview party; $7/show & sale. Coastline Conference Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-6928 or www.wilmingtonantiqueshow.com.

1/22 Pig Pickin' & Music Fest
5–8 p.m. North Carolina Pig Pickin' with music from two great bluegrass/folk bands and giveaways from Cold Stroke Classic's SUP race sponsors. Free with race registration. General admission: $5. Coastal Urge, 2035 Eastwood Road, Wrightsville Beach. Info: coldstrokeclassic.com.

1/22 Fourth Friday
6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

1/22 Live Music at BAC
7 p.m. American singer/songwriter and guitarist Ani DiFranco performs live with one-man punk band Hamell on Trial. Admission: $25–40. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

1/22 James Gregory Live
7:30 p.m. Southern-raised comedian James Gregory spins his universal stories with a dash of preposterous. Admission: $22–36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/22 WindSync Quintet in Concert
7:30 p.m. WindSync, a fresh and energetic wind quintet internationally recognized for dramatic and engaging interpretations of classical music. Admission: $15. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 16 North Sixteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-4578 or www.spechurch.com.

1/22 & 23 Birding Trip
5 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tour Pocosin Lakes and Lake Mattamuskeet, home to tens of thousands of tundra swans and snow geese, to observe a variety of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and land birds. Admission: $90 (includes transportation and entrance fees). Lodging and meals are coordinated. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

1/22 & 23 Dinner Theater
7 p.m. *The Lambda*, set at a gay bar in the late 1970s on the Carolina Beach Boardwalk. Also runs 1/29 & 30. Admission: $20–34. TheatreNOW, 19 South tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

1/22–24 Youth Theater
7 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). *T23: It Takes Two3* (cubed) is a unique collaboration that bridges the gap between youth performers and adult actors. Following the success of *Duets from the Great White Way* and *Songs of the Silver Screen*, *T23* will have a new and exciting twist. Admission: $12. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalian.org.

1/23 Cold Stroke Classic
9 a.m. Annual SUP competition. Paddlers can opt for 3.5-mile recreational course or 7-mile elite course. Also includes a "run what you brung" division in both races, which allows surf skis, canoes and kayaks. Cash prizes awarded to top finishers. Admission: $25–75. Portion of proceeds benefit St. Baldrick's Foundation. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard,

Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-7112 or coldstrokeclassic.com.

1/23 Mystery at the Museum
1–4 p.m. Children act as detectives, applying the scientific method, using chemistry, biology, mathematics and physics to collect evidence and solve a mystery. Admission: $7. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

1/23 Sip, Swap & Shop
6:30 p.m. Gala/fundraiser hosted by Lump to Laughter featuring a swap party, drinks and hors d'oeuvres, raffles, silent and live auctions, vendor booths, door prizes, swag bags and more. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit Lump to Laughter. The Terraces at Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 617-4455 or www.lumptolaughter.org.

1/23 Susan Werner Live
7:30 p.m. Singer/songwriter Susan Werner boldly weaves the old with the new to create her own genre, infusing traditional music styles with her contemporary worldview. Admission: $22–38. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/23 Music on Market
7:30 p.m. Granddaughter of Maria and Baron Von Trapp, Elisabeth Von Trapp's unique artistic style and ethereal voice make for a memorable evening. Free. St. Andrews Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

1/23 Sick of Stupid Tour
8 p.m. Standup comics Stewart Huff, Tom Simmons and Cliff Cash have joined forces for a comedy tour that promises to give audiences an intelligent, comedic look at all things Southern. Admission: $12. Bourgie Nights, 127 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-5252 or sickofstupidtour.com.

1/24 Chamber Music Concert
7:30 p.m. The Calidore String Quartet joins Barbara McKenzie for Brahms' Piano Quintet; the first quartet of Beethoven, Op 18 No. 1; and Mendelssohn's Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13. Admission: $15–30. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

1/24 Beethoven 15K/5K
9 a.m. Race on paved running trails with a picturesque view of the lake. Post-race party and awards ceremony include food, drinks, vendors, exhibitors, and costume contest. Admission: $35–45. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra and its youth education programs. Brunswick Forest, 1007 Evangeline Drive, Leland. Info: (910) 398-5539 or www.wilmington-symphony.org.

1/24 Children's Musical
3 p.m. This year's Pied Piper production, *Bug Story*, is a musical by Steve Cooper that explores a bug society and a host of childhood experiences. Admission: $10. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632.2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

1/24 Grace Potter Live
7 p.m. Grace Potter's epic musical journey reaches a new milestone with the arrival of her solo debut, Midnight, an inspired work that is surprising, revelatory and wildly original. Admission: $32.50–67.50. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 701 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

1/25 Lecture
7 p.m. "College Admissions: A Failed Rite of Passage." Join Michael Thompson, PhD, clinical psychologist, school consultant, international speaker, and author of nine parenting books, for a free discussion on children and schools. Cape Fear Academy, Erin E. McNeill Fine Arts Center, 3900 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: info@capefearacademy.org.

1/25 & 26 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. Theme: "Winter in the Park." Pre-registration required. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

1/27 Live Music @ CAM Cafe
5:30–7:30 p.m. Relax to the soothing sounds of Rob Nathanson on classical guitar. CAM Cafe, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

1/27 Page to Stage
6:30 p.m. Writers, actors and producers share original works of comedy and drama with the community and encourage feedback. Theme: "Winter Tales." Featuring bone-chilling excerpts from two locally written full-length plays. Free admission; donations appreciated. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

1/28 Concerts @ CAM
6:30–7:30 p.m. African-American Classical Composers. Violinist Christa Faison highlights the musical contributions of African American composers of classical music with a live performance. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

1/28 Piano Recital
7:30 p.m. Norman Bemelmans and Elizabeth Loparits perform Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Liszt. Admission: $15–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts.

1/28–31 East Coast Shag Classic
Annual beach music and shag festival held at Wrightsville Beach. Enjoy concerts by The Fantastic Shakers, Jim Quick & Coastline, Gary Lowder & Smokin' Hot, and Band of Oz, plus shag and line dancing lessons, a silent auction, the Big Kahuna beach party, and an anniversary gala celebration. Proceeds benefit Women of Hope. Schedule available online. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 297-7688 or eastcoastshagclassic.com.

1/29 Milestone Dinner
6 p.m. Annual dinner held to publicly recognize the success of LINC (Leading Into New Communities) graduates and participants in the L.I.T.E. program. Cash bar, dinner, and keynote speaker Daryl Atkinson in the Hilton's grand ballroom. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit LINC, Inc. Hilton Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-1132 or www.lincnc.org.

1/29–31 Wine & Chocolate Festival
7–10 p.m. (Friday); 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday). Annual festival featuring a Grand Tasting (Friday) with hors d'oeuvres, beer and cigar bar, entertainment by El Jaye Johnson and the Port City All-Stars and international comedy tour "A Pinch of Basile," artisan exhibits and a Marketplace preview. Saturday & Sunday feature the Marketplace, a tasting tour of the best Carolina wineries, treats from the region's signature chocolatiers, plus demos, a kid's korner and entertainment on the riverfront. Admission: $45–50. Proceeds benefit the Volunteer Older Citizens Action League. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 512-9948 or www.wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.

1/30 NHRMC Founders' Gala
7–11 p.m. Join the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation for a night of food, fun, live music and dancing at a black tie fundraising gala inspired by Vincent Van Gogh's "Starry Night." Admission: $375. Proceeds benefit pediatric patients at Betty H. Cameron Women's & Children's Hospital. Air Wilmington Hangar, 1817 Aviation Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 667-5002 or www.nhrmc.org/nhrmc-foundation.

1/30 Metropolitan Opera
1–4:30 p.m. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Puccini's *Turandot*. Three of opera's most acclaimed sopranos – Christine Goerke, Lise Lindstrom and Nina Stemme–share the title role, the proud princess of ancient China. Admission: $20–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or uncw.edu/olli.

1/30 Created Equal Film Series
2–4:30 p.m. Screening and discussion of documentary film *The Loving Story*. Free. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhclibrary.org.

1/30 Live Music
8 p.m. Massive Grass (alternative bluegrass). Ironclad Brewery, 115 North Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-0290 or www.ironcladbrewery.com.

1/30 & 31 Model Railroad Show & Sale
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Cape Fear Model Railroad Society's annual show and sale with free clinics on interactive operating layouts by Tom Stanley of Tom's Train Station. Admission: $3–5. American Legion Post 10, 702 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 612-0118 or www.capefearmodelrailroadclub.org.

1/30–2/5 iWeek 2016
UNCW's Intercultural Week celebrates the rich diversity of Wilmington with films, performances, panel discussions and lectures. Includes Intercultural Festival, musical selections from around the world, forums on international education and healthcare, sessions on international jobs and internships, faculty research symposium, Lunar New Year celebration and more. Full schedule available online. UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3685 or www.uncw.edu/international/iweek2013.html.

1/31 Jewelry & Sculpture Show
12–6 p.m. Precious metal jewelry and sculpture show hosted by local metalsmith Mitzy Jonkheer. Features 40 of the finest metalsmiths in the Southeast plus handcrafted jewelry from the region's finest enamelists, goldsmiths, silversmiths and glass bead artists. Refreshments available for purchase. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

1/31 Sky Quest
1:30, 2:15, 3 & 3:45 p.m. The Orion Family of Constellations. Learn the science behind the legend of Orion and see

fascinating objects that call the winter sky home. Parental participation required. Admission: $7. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

1/31 Concerts @ CAM
3–4:30 p.m. Ed Stephenson returns with the Paco Band for an afternoon of Spanish music and Nuevo flamenco. Admission: $8–12. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

February 2016

2/1 Word Weavers
7–9 p.m. A Christian writers' group meeting. Life Point Church, 3534 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 619-7344 or sondradron@bellsouth.net.

2/2 Winter Bird Workshop
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Explore a variety of habitats in the Carolina Beach, Ft. Fisher and Wilmington area to identify shorebirds, waterfowl, sparrows and other winter residents. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/2 Leadership Lecture
7 p.m. Acclaimed writer Roxane Gay, author of *Ayiti, An Untamed State,* and *Bad Feminist*, joins the Leadership Lecture Series at UNCW. Admission: $10. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7722 or uncw.edu/artsprograms/leadershiplecture.html.

2/4 Lily Tomlin Live
7:30 p.m. See your favorite characters from Lily Tomlin's monumental comedy career live on stage. Admission: $40–99. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

2/4–6 NC Jazz Festival
Largest traditional jazz festival in the Southeast. Thursday's lineup includes gypsy jazz with Gaylen and friends; Professor Cunningham's old school tribute to the big band era, a tribute to the ladies of jazz by Hod O'Brien and Stephanie Nakasian; and a traditional All-Star jazz jam. On Friday and Saturday, 14 All-Star musicians will deliver traditional sets, all with a different leader. And on Saturday morning, patrons are treated to a musical brunch with All-Star musicians followed by a chance to jam along with them. Admission: $15–60. See website for complete schedule. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 793-1111 or ncjazzfestival.com.

2/4–14 Live Theater
7:30 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents *Death of a Salesman*. Admission: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalian.org.

2/5 Mardi Gras Masquerade
5–7 p.m. Children's Mardi Gras celebration with costumes, crafts, dancing, live music by DJ Battle and parade. Admission: $9.75. Children's Museum, 116 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

2/5 The Stylistics in Concert
8 p.m. The Stylistics present an evening of soul harmonies and hits. Admission: $34.50–59.50. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

2/6 DocuTime Film Festival
10 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Annual documentary film festival where a dedicated community of documentary-lovers can experience sophisticated and inspiring entertainment from around the globe. Admission: $5–7/film; $20–25/day pass. UNCW King Hall Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-4045 or whqr.org/post/docutime-film-festival-2016-uncw.

2/6 Symphony Orchestra Concert
7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra performs Jean Sibelius' life affirming Symphony No. 5 with winners of the annual Richard R. Deas Student Concerto Competition. Admission: $25–27. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

2/8 & 9 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. Theme: "Nature's Valentines." Pre-registration required. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/11 Jazz at the CAM
6:30–8 p.m. Grenoldo Frazier performs love songs with a twist. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

2/12 Feast Down East Conference
8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Regional event featuring workshops for those who support a thriving food system in southeastern North Carolina. Workshop topics include agricultural and gardening techniques, farm business skills, local food buying and advocacy, local food policy and council work. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: www.feastdowneast.org.

2/12 Daniel Beaty Live
7:30 p.m. Daniel Beaty: *Emergency*. North Carolina writer and actor Daniel Beaty portrays 40 characters reacting to a slave ship emerging in front of the Statue of Liberty, weaving a stirring commentary on what it is to be human and the longing to be free. Admission: $15–40. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/presents/currentseason.html.

2/13 Valentine 10K
9 a.m. 10K leads runners under the Wrightsville Beach drawbridge, over the Causeway, and alongside Banks Channel. Admission: $40–45. Proceeds benefit Wrightsville Beach Parks & Recreation. Wrightsville Beach Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (919) 302-4393 or its-go-time.com/wbvalentine10k.

2/13 Induction Ceremony
10 a.m. UNCW's Athletic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. New inductees include basketball legend John Goldsberry, baseball coaching icon Rick James, track and field star Anna Raynor Marbry, and basketball player Tressa Reese McKeithan. Admission: $20. UNCW Warwick Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3236 or www.uncwsports.com.

2/13 Polar Plunge
11 a.m. Annual 5K winds through Carolina Beach and ends with a cold plunge into the Atlantic Ocean. Costumes encouraged. Includes live music, silent auction, and costume contest. After party at The Lazy Pirate. Registration: $25–65. Proceeds benefit Special Olympics New Hanover County. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Carolina Beach Avenue South, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 341-7253 or www.plungenhc.com.

2/14 Opera Wilmington
4–6 p.m. Champagne, chocolate, and the world's most passionate music. Arias, duets, trios and quartets sung by your favorite Opera Wilmington performers. Includes music from *La Bohème*, *Così Fan Tutte* and *Der Roter*. Admission: $40. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.opera-wilmington.org.

2/14 NC Symphony Concert
7:30 p.m. *The Firebird*. The NC Symphony performs *Handel: Music for the Royal Fireworks*; Haydn: *Symphony No. 59*, "Fire"; Sean Shepherd: Blue Blazes; and Stravinsky: Suite from The Firebird. Conducted by Grant Llewellyn. Pre-concert talk with Dr. Barry Salwen at 6:30 p.m. Admission: $20–70. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (877) 627-6724 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

2/16 Gaspard & Dancers
7:30 p.m. Acclaimed North Carolina company Gaspard & Dancers presents three contemporary pieces including their newest work, "Tota Pulchra Es" ("You Are All Beautiful"). Admission: $30. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

2/17 Anders Osborne in Concert
7 p.m. New Orleans' Anders Osborne brings his richly detailed songwriting, intensely emotional vocals and expert guitar work to Wilmington. Amy Helm & The Handsome Strangers open. Admission: $20–35. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

2/18 Bird Hike
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Join Halyburton Park in exploring Ev-Henwood along the NC Birding Trail. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/19 Pizza Putt
6–10 p.m. The museum transforms into an 18-hole mini golf course where guests can enjoy a round of golf, pizza, and beer and wine from local bars and restaurants. Includes music, photo booth, cornhole toss, putt competition, raffle and party favors. Admission: $20; $30/pair. Children's Museum, 116 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

2/19–21 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market featuring up-cycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Location: 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway, Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

2/19–21 Spring Home Show
11 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Annual show for homeowners in all stages of remodeling, landscaping and decorating. View hundreds of exhibits, product demos, interior and exterior vignettes, and seek advice and inspira-

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tion from the pros. Free. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 210-6138 or www.wilmingtonhomeshow.com.

2/20 Run for Ray Trail Run
8:30 a.m. Trail run on the low bluffs of Brunswick Nature Park; 3, 9 or 18-mile routes. Admission: $25–50. Proceeds benefit the Ray Underhill Foundation. Brunswick Nature Park, 2601 River Road, Winnabow. Info: its-go-time.com/run-for-ray-trail-run.

2/20 Cape Fear Heart Ball
6–10 p.m. Annual black-tie fundraiser for The American Heart Association featuring a silent auction and cocktail reception followed by dinner, music, dancing and live auction. Proceeds benefit the American Heart Association. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.businessmadecasual.com.

2/20 Music on Market
7:30 p.m. The ten-member Raleigh Flute Choir, one of America's leading flute ensembles. Free. St. Andrews Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

2/20 Listen Up Brunswick County
7:30 p.m. American folk singer/songwriter Vance Gilbert performs live as part of Listen Up Brunswick County's annual music series. Admission: $20–24. Proceeds benefit New Hope Clinic. BCCC, Odell Auditorium, 50 College Road NE, Bolivia. Info: (860) 485-3354 or www.listenupbrunswickcounty.com.

2/20 & 21 Art for All 6
12–6 p.m. Downtown cutting-edge art show and sale featuring more than 50 local artists, food trucks and cash bar. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

2/21 Battleship Program
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Battleship Firepower. Explore the Battleship's gun houses and ammunition loading compartments and learn how fire control equipment, battery plotting rooms, and the combat information center operated. Adults only. Admission: $85–95. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

2/21 Monty's Home Pet Expo
11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Indoor pet expo featuring more than 70 pet-related vendors, rescue booths, silent auction, and a kid's corner filled with games, prizes and interactive learning about pet care. Admission: $5. Proceeds benefit Monty's Home canine rescue/prison training program as well as education and grief support. Coastline Convention Center, 533 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 259-7911 or www.montyshome.org/expo.

2/21 Bridal Show
1–4 p.m. Everything you need to plan your special day under one roof. Tour the resort, spend one-on-one time with top area wedding pros, and enjoy food, door prizes, giveaways and more. Admission: $5. Shell Island Resort, 2700 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8696 or www.shellisland.com.

2/22 & 23 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. Theme: "ABC's of Nature." Pre-registration required. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/24–28 Live Theatre
8 p.m. (Monday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Opera House Theatre Company presents Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. Admission: $32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-4234 or www.operahousetheatrecompany.net.

2/25 Play at the Beach
11 a.m. Join the Assistance League of Greater Wilmington for raffles, bridge, *mah-jongg* and board games. Groups of four players can reserve a table. Admission: $30; lunch provided. Proceeds benefit philanthropic programs in New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender Counties. Shell Island Resort, 2700 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 686-3902 or www.algw.assistanceleague.org.

2/25 Musical Theater
7:30 p.m. *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, directed and choreographed by Tony Award-winner Andy Blankenbuehler, reimagines the Biblical story of Joseph and the coat of many colors. Admission: $45–65. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

2/26 Fourth Friday
6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration

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of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

2/26–29 Youth Theater
7 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association Children's Theatre presents Disney's *101 Dalmatians Kids!* Admission: $12. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or thalian.org.

2/27 Camellia Club Show & Sale
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Winter show and sale featuring prize-winning blooms grown by Tidewater Camellia Club members and local residents, plus educational and floral displays. More than 1,000 blooms will be displayed for evaluation by American Camellia Society judges. Children's art presented by local elementary schools. Free. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 509-1792 or www.tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

2/27 & 28 Moores Creek Anniversary
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Commemorate the 240th Anniversary of the Battle at Moores Creek Bridge with reenactment, live music, games and colonial toys. Living historians will be on the battlefield demonstrating musket and cannon firing, blacksmithing, candle dipping, spinning, cooking, gardening, powder horn making and more. Free. Moores Creek National Battlefield, 40 Patriots hall Drive, Currie. Info: www.facebook.com/moorescreeknps.

1/28 Youth Nature Program
10 a.m. Children ages 3–6 explore the world around them with hands-on activities, experiments and fun in the museum park. Includes interactive story time, exploration stations, and play related to weekly theme. Parental supervision required. Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

2/28 Symphonic Winds Concert
7–8:30 p.m. Wilmington Symphonic Winds' second concert of the season, "Dancing the Night Away." includes works by Shostakovich, Bernstein, Tchaikovsky, and Sousa. Admission: $8–12. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or wilmingtonsymphonicwinds.org.

2/28 Chamber Music Wilmington
7:30 p.m. The Magnolia Baroque's all-Bach concert features Cantata No. 51 for baroque trumpet and soprano, the B Minor Orchestral Suite, and the Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. Admission: $15–30. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films
7 p.m. (plus 4 p.m. Wednesday showing) Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Chi-Raq (1/25–27); Peggy Guggenheim: Art Addict (2/1–5). Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wednesday Echo
7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 East Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM
12–1 p.m. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

To add a calendar event, please contact us: ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Salt
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Port City People

Diamonds & Champagne Hope Ball

Coastline Convention Center

Saturday, November 7, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

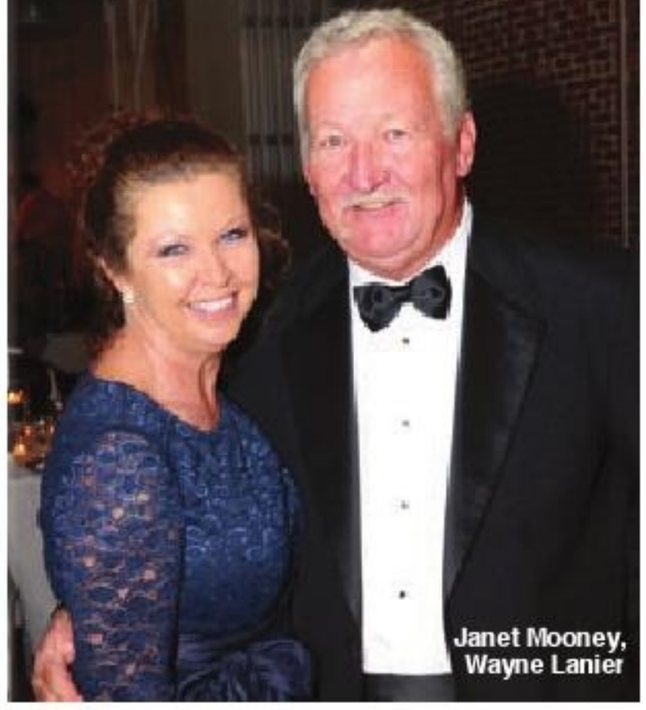
Delores & Mike Riley

Libby & Mark King

Patrick Magruder, Olivia Battle, Kenny Barnes

Babs McDance, Bobby Collins, Victoria Bollinger

Zachary Messick, Grace Baumer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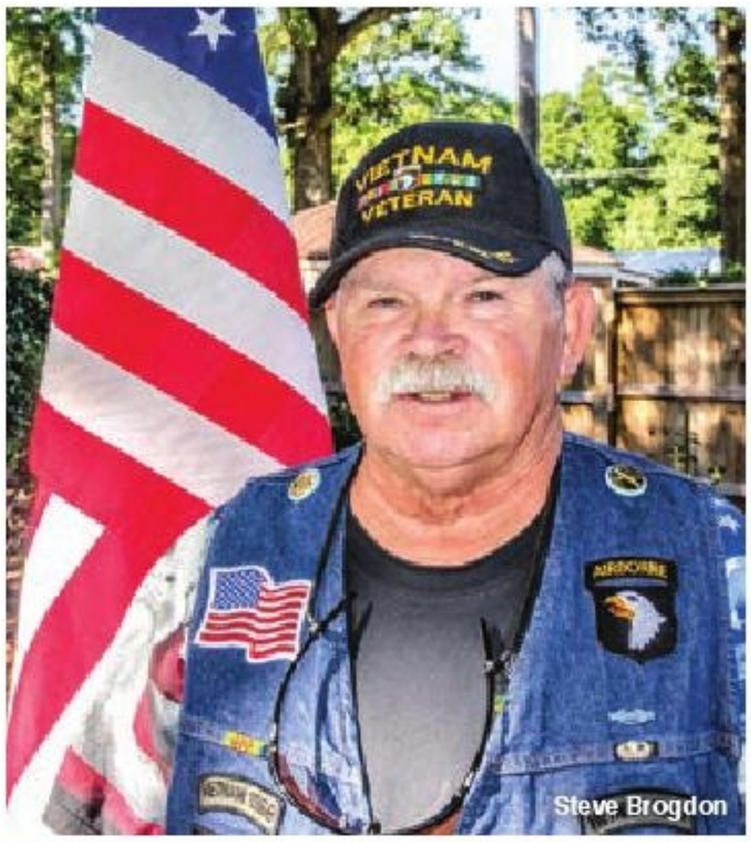
Port City People

Durwood Baggett Memorial Contemplation Garden Dedication

The Arboretum

Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour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The Cape Fear Chordsmen

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Ilario Pantano

Charles Lapansky, Gene Funderburk

Patricia Watts, Robb Zapple

David Baggett

Skip Watkins, Jonathon Barfield, Jr., Larry Wooten

Margaret Haynes

Mary Mobley Baggett and family, Charles Lapansky

Entrance of the Honor Guard, Bag Piper, Cape Fear Chordsmen

Port City People

Cucalorus Opening Night Party

Ziggy's in Wilmington

Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Patrick Brackney, Zoe Gilliam, Addy Marks, Meredith Graham

Cindy Hsieh, Wil Davis

Matthew Flinchum, Della Wortham, Clara Robinson

Hannah Black, Megan Petersen

Sarah Royal, Courtney Rivenbark

Marshall Johnson Tina Cifuentes, Jen Yeakel, Courtney Bridgers

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Chelsea Rutledge, Justin Mitchener, Ashley Trew

Katie Tian, Justin Lacy

Caitlin Taylor, Lauren Krouse, Joanne Carpenter

Port City People

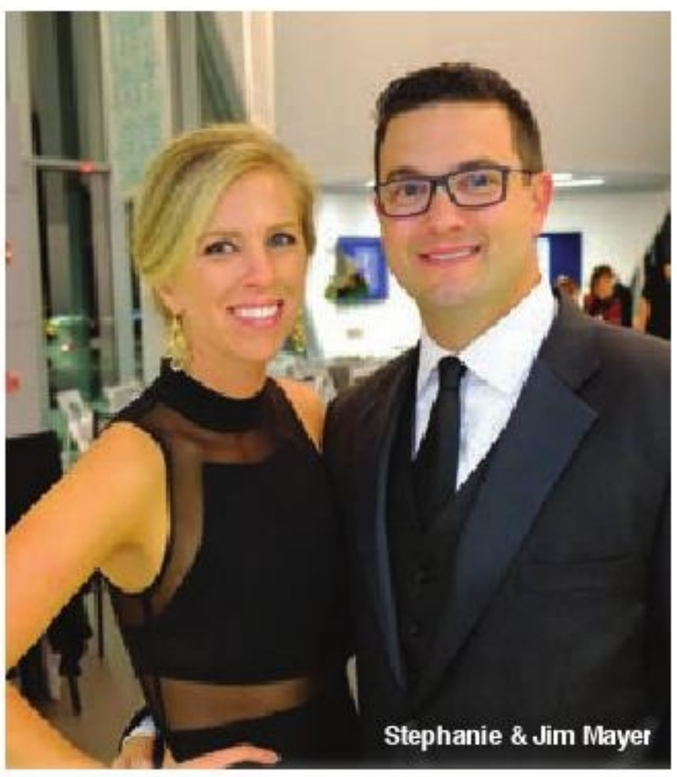
10th Annual Wilmington Fur Ball
Audi Cape Fear

Saturday, December 5, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Marcus & Jessica Conklin

Justin & Christin Miller, Li & Gary Nichols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Erick Meliher, Michelle Caldwell

Ryan Goodrich, David Tignonsini, Wiebke Fahnemann, Caris Dustin

Anthony Connings, Kirsten Gravely

Austin Peterson, Brooke Townsend

Jackie & Ben Hooks, Bruce Umstetter

Jason & Carly Forman

Carly Forman, Jessica Jordan, Kirsten Gravely, Shana Dege

Mike & Nancy Marapese

John & Pam Valente

Welcome to the Zoo, Star Children

By Astrid Stellanova

According to the Chinese zodiac, the Year of the Monkey begins officially on February 8. Let me also share another astrological tidbit. According to my Eastern mystical sources, those born in the Year of the Monkey are attracted to Rat people. I don't know if this explains my attraction to Beau, who is a true Rat person, but it sounds about right to my ear. After all, I do have the famous Monkey mind, which is why my business ideas are prone to fizzle before they get going. Shakespeare was wrong. The fault lies in our stars, dear readers. –Ad Astra, Astrid

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

When the New Year rang in last month, you had a sobering time (well, didn't we all, Sugar?) making sense of the previous evening. Some of your actions took you by surprise. Some of them took everybody at the party by surprise. In the heartache department, seems you set your cap for someone who is a hard dog to keep on the porch. Let's just say give them free rein and see if they're truly worth the worry. As Grandpa H. says, if that dog caught the car it couldn't drive it anyway. They may not deserve you; you definitely deserve every good thing. Give yourself the kindness you grant others all year long.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

When you finally realized what your true purpose in life is, you grew as sober as a Mormon preacher on Sunday morning. It has been a time of awakenings for you, Muffin, and some of them were rude. You have all the skills to cope; your true journey will take you places you never expected to go, doing things you never foresaw. Fasten your seat belt.

Aries (March 21–April 19)

You're the first person friends turn to when they want to whine and dine, because your first inclination is to entertain and make others laugh. But what you need most is to surround yourself with a few truth tellers who will help you on your soul's journey. You don't need an audience; you need counsel and a better road map for the quest ahead.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

One thing you will like about 2016 is that money comes easier than normal for you. In fact, you are going to find yourself with enough greenbacks to burn a wet mule. The fat bank account you are going to enjoy is not going to compensate for some of the worries you have had, but it sure as the dickens will make them a little lighter.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

You happen to befriend someone who is about as country as a bowl of grits this month; they wind up being a lot wiser than they sound and have some important wisdom to share. If you can keep your smarty-pants ego in check, you will be the wiser for it. They are a real gift from the universe, Baby.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

Mama had a saying that I have never gotten over: Good girls don't tat, smoke, chew, or date boys who do. Well, I've broken at least two of those rules. Does that make me a bad girl? Does breaking the social rules make anyone bad? I say it's high time we all were less judgmental and more tolerant. You probably know exactly why I'm saying so, Honey.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

You're just a sittin' duck on the water and somebody has you in their sight line. Who have you trusted that didn't deserve it? And how come you keep paddling out to the same pond? Your chart suggests this is unusual – if anything you are normally slow to trust others. Examine your motives, my Ducky.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)

Child, in my family, we have a running joke about the three-legged dog who traveled a minute in thirty seconds. But you are no joke – you are faster to the draw and the first to connect the dots this month. In business, this is going to give you a real advantage. In relationships, you will hold the aces and stun yourself.

Libra (September 23–October 22)

You are admired, and feared, for your integrity. But someone in authority needs to think they have the upper hand over you, even though they don't, Sweet Cakes. This may require you to be a little careless with the truth and excessive with praise. To work, let me offer you this: Fattery is best laid on with a shovel, not a hand trowel.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

Everybody else sees it: Someone close to you never tires of singing their own praises. This poor soul is about as loud as a rooster and subtle as a bag of hammers. What they want most is your approval. Give in, Sugar. In order to have a little peace, let them know you hear them and stroke their frail little ol' tail feathers and sagging ego.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

Pepsi or Coke? Oreos or chocolate chip? Bourbon or beer? Why do we want what we want? And is there a right or wrong preference? Honey, it's wonderful to say what we require in life, and don't fear stating your wants, needs, or likes. It isn't necessary to deny yourself of whatever floats your boat – stake your claim.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

A surprising journey is going to take you to some conclusions you don't even have to jump to get to – this time they are real ones, as a matter of fact. This adventure could change old ideas about yourself, and open something new. Or, you can avoid change altogether and get more of what you already have. Ask yourself: Do you like the status quo that much?

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Blue Apron Special

By Clyde Edgerton

My buddy Charlie Garren and I are visiting Beaufort, North Carolina, staying in a waterfront condo, our boat docked outside. We're supposed to be fishing—but it's a cold and wintry night.

"What do you think about staying inside and cooking up that Blue Apron meal?" I ask.

"Great idea," says Charlie.

Blue Apron is a fad you may know about—meals shipped by UPS, uncooked, in a large cardboard box. Ingredients are packed inside the box with ice that will last, I'm guessing, up to thirty days in the Sahara Desert. Illustrated directions are included, written on a laminated piece of paper. These instructions say—now remember this—10-minute prep, 25 to 35 minutes to cook.

"Charlie," I say. "Let's time this. I'm a little suspicious."

"It's seven thirty-five," he says. "I'll keep time."

Our meal is shrimp and cheesy grits with collards and green tomato chutney. From the refrigerator I get the eleven ingredients, individually wrapped in eleven separate packages:

1 1/8 pounds shrimp
1 1/4 cups yellow grits
4 ounces Monterey jack cheese
1 bunch collard greens
1 green tomato
1 yellow onion
1 ounce pea shoots
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons golden raisins
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
1 tablespoon Cajun spice blend

Remember I said individually wrapped? I wrestle, pinch, pull, scissor, blowtorch, and sledge-hammer open each individual package. Next come six steps for completion of the meal:

1. Prepare the ingredients
2. Make the cheesy grits
3. Make the chutney
4. Cook the collard greens
5. Add the shrimp
6. Finish and serve your dish

Each step is followed by a paragraph of instructions.

People. When I finish step one, prepare the ingredients, we are 25 minutes in. I will not write out directions for each of the six steps, but listen, I'm at the end of step ONE on a meal that is supposed to take ten minutes to prep and it's already 8 p.m.

Charlie is looking for pots and pans in this strange kitchen, and I've been reading these little paragraphs aloud, and we have begun to laugh. Here's what step one—prepare the ingredients—says:

Wash and dry the fresh produce. In a medium pot, combine 5 cups of water and a big pinch of salt; heat to boiling on high. *Think about it – how long is that going to take?* Grate the cheese. *It keeps crumbling. The only grate we can find is full of holes that are each the diameter of a hair.* Core and medium dice the tomato. Peel and small dice the onion. Remove and discard the collard green stems; slice the leaves into 1-inch-wide strips. *This is a mess of collards, y'all.*

Picture yourself doing all that. What I'm thinking is that the directions meant ten-minute preparation if you have a large church choir to prepare everything all at once.

I say to Charlie, "What?! Remove and discard the collard stems?" I then look ahead to number four (of the six steps), which is "Cook the collard greens." Here's what it says:

In the pan used to make the chutney, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil on medium-high until hot. Add the collard greens, remaining onion and 1/4 cup water; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, 5 to 7 minutes, or until the collard greens have wilted and the onion has softened.

I keep having to jump from step one to step four to step two and then to step three.

I say, "Cook these collards for 5 to 7 minutes?! My lord. My mamma cooked collards all day."

I do not remove and discard the collard green stems. No way. That would take another twenty minutes at least.

Charlie, behind me, at the electric flat-top stove, is trying to figure out how the eyes work. He burns himself.

Then back on step two, I realize I need to stop to do step three, else we will be forty-five minutes in before we even think about what to do with the collards and beyond that, I'm not sure which number I'm on now.

Charlie comes over, reads, and says, "It looks like you have to cook everything in a pan that has already had something cooked in it—and we only have clean pans."

That sets us off again. Laughing.

I lose the spice mix under the collards and then find it.

Charlie says the cheese is grated so thin he can't see it.

"The stove fan sucked it up," I say.

We don't remove the grits from the heat soon enough. Smoke.

Now we're supposed to set the grits aside "in a warm place." We are silly laughing. Charlie puts the grits in the oven, then comes over and finds a brown raisin among the golden ones and wonders if we should discard it.

At the end of the chutney cooking we are supposed to find another "warm place." For the chutney.

We sit down to eat at about an hour and a half in, at just after 9 p.m.

I say, "I'm looking forward to breakfast—to cracking open one egg, frying it. Then cracking open another one and frying that one."

Charlie says, "I'll do some toast."

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

Figure 8 Island: Private Beaches with Pristine Waters

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6 Sounds Point Road
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5 Backfin Point
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88 Beach Road South
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827 South Lumina Avenue
Wrightsville Beach | $2,895,000

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413 Beach Road North
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